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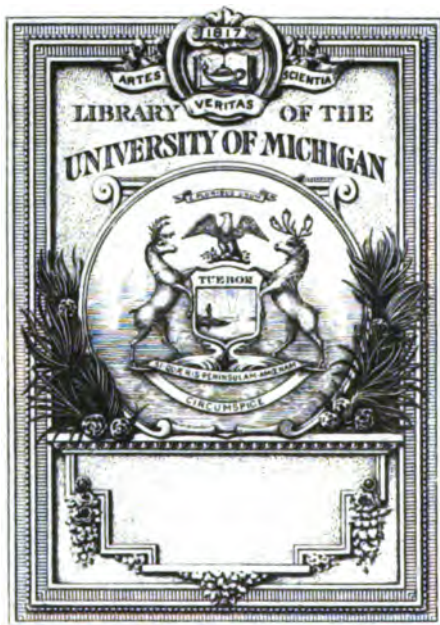
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March, 1912.

The Quest

BY
FREDERIK VAN EEDEN

THE AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION
FROM THE DUTCH OF
DE KLEINE JOHANNES
BY
LAURA WARD COLE



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PART I

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THE QUEST

I

I WILL tell you something about Little Johannes and his quest. My story is very like a fairy tale, but everything in it really happened. As soon as you lose faith in it, read no farther, for then it was not written for you. And, should you chance to meet Little Johannes, you must never speak to him about it, for that would grieve him and make me sorry I had told you all this.

Johannes lived in an old house with a big garden. It was hard to find the way about them, for in the house were many dark halls, flights of stairs, chambers, and spacious garrets; and in the garden everywhere were fencings and hot-houses. To Johannes it was a whole world in itself. He could make far journeys in it, and he gave names to everything he discovered. For the house he chose names from the animal kingdom; the caterpillar loft, because there he fed the caterpillars and watched them change their state; the chicken room, because once he had found a hen there. This had not come of itself, but had been put there by Johannes' mother, to brood. For things in the garden, preferring those products of which he was most fond, he chose names from the vegetable kingdom, such as Raspberry Mountain, Gooseberry Woods, and Strawberry Valley. Behind all was a little spot he named Paradise; and there, of course, it was exceedingly delightful. A great sheet of water lay there — a pond where white water-lilies were floating, and where the reeds held long, whispered conversations with the wind. On the opposite side lay the dunes. Paradise itself was a little grass-plot on the near shore, encircled by shrubbery. From the midst of this shot up the tall nightingale-plant. There, in the thick grass, Johannes often lay gazing through the swaying stalks to the gentle hill-tops beyond the water. He used to go every warm summer

evening and lie looking for hours, without ever growing weary of it. He thought about the still depths of the clear water before him — how cozy it must be down amid the water plants, in that strange half-light. And then again, he thought of the far-away, gloriously-tinted clouds which hovered above the dunes — wondering what might be behind them, and if it would not be fine to be able to fly thither. Just as the sun was sinking, the clouds piled up upon one another till they seemed to form the entrance to a grotto; and from the depths of that grotto glowed a soft, red light. Then Johannes would feel a longing to be there. Could I only fly into it! he thought. What would really be beyond? Shall I sometime — sometime be able to get there?

But often as he made this wish, the grotto always fell apart in ashen, dusky flecks, and he never was able to get nearer to it. Then it would grow cold and damp by the pond, and again he would seek his dark little bedroom in the old house.

He lived there not entirely alone. He had a father who took good care of him, a dog named Presto, and a cat named Simon. Of course, he thought most of his father, but he by no means considered Presto and Simon so very much beneath him, as a big man would have. He confided even more secrets to Presto than to his father, and for Simon he felt a devout respect. That was not strange, for Simon was a big cat with glossy, black fur, and a thick tail. By merely looking at him one could see that he was perfectly convinced of his own greatness and wisdom. He always remained dignified and proper, even when he condescended to play with a rolling spool, or while gnawing a waste herring-head behind a tree. At the extreme demonstrativeness of Presto he closed his green eyes disdainfully, and thought: "Well — dogs know no better!"

Can you realize now, that Johannes had a great awe of him? He held much more intimate relations with the little brown dog. Presto was neither beautiful nor superior, but an unusually good and sagacious dog, never farther than two steps away from Johannes, and patiently listening to whatever his

master told him. I do not need to tell you how much Johannes thought of Presto. But he still had room in his heart for other things. Does it seem strange that his little dark bedroom, with the diamond window-panes, held also a large place? He liked the wall-hangings, with the big flowers in which he saw faces — faces he had so often studied when he was ill, or while he lay awake mornings. He liked the one small picture that hung there. It represented stiff figures walking in a still stiffer garden beside a smooth lake, where sky-high fountains were spouting, and coquetting swans were swimming. He liked best, however, the hanging clock. He always wound it up carefully and seriously, and considered it a necessary courtesy to watch it while it was striking. At least that was the way unless he happened to be asleep. If, through neglect, the clock ran down, Johannes felt very guilty and begged its pardon a thousand times. You would have laughed, perhaps, if you had heard him in conversation with his room. But confess how often you talk to your own self. It does not appear to you in the least ridiculous. Besides, Johannes was convinced that his hearers understood him perfectly, and he had no need of an answer. Secretly, however, he expected an answer some day from the clock or the wall-paper.

Johannes certainly had schoolmates, but they were not properly friends. He played with them, invented plots in school, and formed robber bands with them out-of-doors; but he only felt really at home when he was alone with Presto. Then he never longed for the boys, but felt himself at ease and secure.

His father was a wise and serious man, who often took Johannes with him on long expeditions through the woods and over the dunes. They talked but little — and Johannes followed ten steps behind his father, greeting the flowers he met. And the old trees, which must always remain in the selfsame place, he stroked along their rough bark with his friendly little hand. Then the good-natured giants rustled their thanks.

Sometimes his father wrote letters in the sand, one by one, and Johannes spelled the words which they formed. Again, the father stopped and taught Johannes the name of some plant or animal.

And Johannes often asked questions, for he saw and heard many perplexing things. He often asked silly questions. He wanted to know why the world was just as it was, why plants and animals must die, and if miracles could take place. But Johannes' father was a wise man, and did not tell all he knew. That was well for Johannes.

Evenings, before he went to sleep, Johannes always made a long prayer. His nurse had taught him. He prayed for his father and for Presto. Simon, he thought, did not need to be prayed for. He prayed a good while for himself, too, and almost always ended with the wish that some day there might be a miracle. And when he had said *Amen*, he peeped expectantly around the darkening room, at the faces on the wall-hangings, which looked still stranger in the faint twilight; and at the door-knob, and the clock, where the miracle ought now to begin. But the clock always kept on ticking in the very same way — the door-knob did not stir — it grew quite dark, and Johannes fell asleep without having seen the miracle.

But some day it would happen. He knew it would.

II

It was warm by the pool and utterly still. The sun, flushed and tired with his daily work, seemed to rest a moment on the rim of the dunes, for a breathing spell before diving under. The smooth water reflected, almost perfectly, the flaming face of the sun. The leaves of the beech tree which hung over the pond took advantage of the stillness to look at themselves attentively, in the mirror-like water. The solitary heron, standing on one foot between the broad leaves of a water-lily, forgot that he had come out to catch frogs, and, deep in thought, was gazing along his nose.

Then came Johannes to the grass plot, to see the cloud-grotto. Plump! plump! sprang the frogs from the bank. The mirror was all rippled, the image of the sun was broken up into broad bands, and the beech leaves rustled angrily, for they had not yet viewed themselves long enough.

Fastened to the bare roots of a beech tree lay a little old boat. Johannes had been strictly forbidden to get into it; but, oh, how strong the temptation was this evening! The clouds had already taken the semblance of a wondrous portal, behind which the sun would soon sink to rest. Glittering ranks of clouds ranged themselves at the sides, like a golden-armored life-guard. The face of the water reflected the glow, and red rays darted through the reeds like arrows.

Slowly, Johannes loosened the boat-rope from the roots. He would drift there, in the midst of the splendor. Presto had already sprung into the boat, and before his master intended it the reeds moved apart, and away they both drifted toward the evening sun.

Johannes lay in the bow, and gazed into the depths of the light-grotto. Wings! thought he. Wings now, and away I would fly!

The sun had disappeared, but the clouds were all aglow.

In the east the sky was deep blue. A row of willows stood along the bank, their small, pale leaves thrust motionlessly out into the still air. They looked like exquisite, pale-green lace against the sombre background.

Hark! What was that? It darted and whizzed like a gust of wind cutting a sharp furrow in the face of the water. It came from the dunes — from the grotto in the clouds!

When Johannes looked round, a big, blue dragon-fly sat on the edge of the boat. He had never seen one so large. It rested there, but its wings kept quivering in a wide circle. It seemed to Johannes that the tips of its wings made a luminous ring.

That must be a fire dragon-fly, he thought — a rare thing.

The ring grew larger and larger, and the wings whirled so fast that Johannes could see nothing but a haze. And little by little, from out this haze, he saw the shining of two dark eyes; and a light, frail form in a garment of delicate blue sat in the place of the dragon-fly. A wreath of white wind-flowers rested upon the fair hair, and at the shoulders were gauzy wings which shimmered in a thousand hues, like a soap bubble.

A thrill of happiness coursed through Johannes. *This* was a miracle!

"Will you be my friend?" he whispered.

That was a queer way of speaking to a stranger. But this was not an every-day case, and he felt as if he had always known this little blue being.

"Yes, Johannes," came the reply, and the voice sounded like the rustling of the reeds in the night wind, or the pattering of rain-drops on the forest leaves.

"What is your name?" asked Johannes.

"I was born in the cup of a wind-flower. Call me Windekind."*

Windekind laughed, and looked in Johannes' eyes so merrily that his heart was blissfully cheered.

"To-day is my birthday," said Windekind. "I was born

* See note, page 520.

not far away, of the first rays of the moon and the last rays of the sun. They say the sun is feminine.* It is not true. The sun is my father."

Johannes determined forthwith to speak of the sun as masculine, the next morning, in school.

"Look! There comes up the round, fair face of my mother. Good evening, Mother! Oh! oh! But she looks both good-natured and distressed!"

He pointed to the eastern horizon. There, in the dusky heavens, behind the willow lace-work which looked black against the silver disk, rose the great shining moon. Her face wore a pained expression.

"Come, come, Mother! Do not be troubled. Indeed, I can trust him!"

The beautiful creature fluttered its gauzy wings frolicsomenely and touched Johannes on the cheek with the Iris in its hand.

"She does not like it that I am with you. You are the first one. But I trust you, Johannes. You must never, never speak my name nor talk about me to a human being. Do you promise?"

"Yes, Windekind," said Johannes. It was still so strange to him. He felt inexpressibly happy, yet fearful of losing his happiness. Was he dreaming? Near him, Presto lay calmly sleeping on the seat. The warm breath of his dog put him at rest. The gnats swarmed over the face of the water, and danced in the sultry air, just as usual. Everything was quite clear and plain about him. It must be true! And all the time he felt resting upon him the trustful glance of Windekind. Then again he heard the sweet, quavering voice:

"I have often seen you here, Johannes. Do you know where I was? Sometimes I sat on the sandy bottom of the pond, among the thick water plants, and looked up at you as you leaned over to drink, or to peep at the water beetles, or the newts. But you never saw me. And many times I peeped

* In Dutch, the word sun is feminine.

at you from the thick reeds. I am often there. When it is warm I sleep in an empty reed-bird's nest. And, oh! it is so soft!"

Windekind rocked contentedly on the edge of the boat, and struck at the gnats with his flower.

"I have come now to give you a little society. Your life will be too dreary, otherwise. We shall be good friends, and I will tell you many things — far better things than the school-master palms off upon you. He knows absolutely nothing about them. And when you do not believe me, I shall let you see and hear for yourself. I will take you with me."

"Oh, Windekind! dear Windekind! Can you take me there?" cried Johannes, pointing to the sky, where the crimson light of the setting sun had just been streaming out of the golden cloud-gates. That glorious arch was already melting away in dull, grey mist, yet from the farthest depths a faint, rosy light was still shining.

Windekind gazed at the light which was gilding his delicate features and his fair locks, and he gently shook his head.

"Not yet, Johannes, not yet. You must not ask too much just now. Even I have not yet been at my father's home."

"I am always with my father," said Johannes.

"No! That is not your father. We are brothers, and my father is your father, too. But the earth is your mother, and for that reason we are very different. Besides, you were born in a house, with human beings, and I in a wind-flower. The latter is surely better. But it will be all the same to us."

Then Windekind sprang lightly upon the side of the boat, which did not even stir beneath his weight, and kissed Johannes' forehead.

That was a strange sensation for Johannes. Everything about him was changed.

He saw everything now, he thought, much better and more exactly. The moon looked more friendly, too, and he saw that the water-lilies had faces, and were gazing at him pensively.

Suddenly he understood why the gnats were all the time dancing so merrily around one another, back and forth and up and down, till their long legs touched the water. Once he had thought a good deal about it, but now he understood perfectly.

He knew, also, what the reeds were whispering, and he heard the trees on the bank softly complaining because the sun had set.

"Oh, Windekind, I thank you! This is delightful. Yes, indeed, we will have nice times together!"

"Give me your hand," said Windekind, spreading his many-colored wings. Then he drew Johannes in the boat, over the water, through the lily leaves which were glistening in the moonlight.

Here and there, a frog was sitting on a leaf. But now he did not jump into the water when Johannes came. He only made a little bow, and said: "Quack." Johannes returned the bow politely. Above everything, he did not wish to appear conceited.

Then they came to the rushes. They were wide-spread, and the boat entirely disappeared in them without having touched the shore. But Johannes held fast to his guide, and they scrambled through the high stalks to land.

Johannes thought he had become smaller and lighter, but perhaps that was imagination. Still, he could not remember ever having been able to climb up a grass stalk.

"Now be ready," said Windekind, "you are going to see something funny."

They walked on through the high grass, beneath the dark undergrowth which here and there let through a small, shining moonbeam.

"Did you ever hear the crickets evenings in the dunes? It is just as if they were having a concert. Is it not? But you can never tell where the sound comes from. Now they never sing for the pleasure of it; but the sound comes from the cricket-school where hundreds of little crickets are

learning their lessons by heart. Keep still, for we are close to them."

Chirp! Chirp!

The bushes became less dense, and when Windekind pushed apart the grass blades with his flower, Johannes saw a brightly lighted, open spot in the thin, spindling dune-grass, where the crickets were busily learning their lessons.

Chirp! Chirp!

A big fat cricket was teacher, and heard the lessons. One by one the pupils sprang up to him; always with one spring forward, and one spring back again, to their places. The one that made a bad spring was obliged to take his stand upon a toadstool.

"Pay good attention, Johannes. Perhaps you too can learn something," said Windekind.

Johannes understood very well what the little crickets answered. But it was not in the least like that which the teacher of his school taught. First came geography. They knew nothing of the parts of the world. They were only obliged to learn twenty-six dunes and two ponds. No one could know anything about what lay beyond, said the teacher, and whatever might be told about it was nothing but idle fancy.

Then botany had its turn. They were all very clever at that, and there were many prizes distributed: selected grass blades of various lengths — tender and juicy. But the zoology astonished Johannes the most. There were springing, flying, and creeping creatures. The crickets could spring and fly, and therefore stood at the head. Then followed the frogs. The birds were mentioned, with every token of aversion, as most harmful and dangerous. Finally, human beings were discussed. They were great, useless, dangerous creatures that stood very low, since they could neither fly nor spring; but luckily they were very scarce. A wee little cricket who had never yet seen a human being got three hits with a wisp because he numbered human beings, by mistake, among the harmless animals.

Johannes had never heard anything like this before.

Suddenly, the teacher called out: "Silence. The springing exercise!" Instantly all the little crickets stopped studying their lessons and began to play leap-frog. They played with skill and zeal, and the fat teacher took the lead.

It was such a merry sight that Johannes clapped his hands with joy.

At the sound, the entire school rushed off in a twinkling to the dunes; and the little grass plot was as still as death.

"See what you have done, Johannes!" cried Windekind. "You must not be so rude — one can very well see that you were born among human beings."

"I am sorry. I will try my best to behave. But it was so funny!"

"It is going to be funnier still," said Windekind.

They cut across the grass plot and ascended the dunes on the other side.

Ah, me! It was hard work in the deep sand, but Johannes caught hold of Windekind's light blue garment, and then he sped quickly and lightly up the slope. Half-way to the top was a rabbit-hole.

The rabbit whose home it was lay with his head and fore-paws out of the entrance. The sweet-briar was still in flower, and its faint, delicate fragrance mingled with that of the wild thyme which was growing near.

Johannes had often seen rabbits disappear into their holes. He wondered what it was like inside them, and about how many could sit together there, and if it would not be very stifling. So he was very glad when he heard his companion ask the rabbit if they might take a peep inside.

"Willingly, so far as I am concerned," said the rabbit, "but unfortunately, it just happens that I have resigned my dwelling this evening for the giving of a charity-festival. So really, I am not master in my own house."

"Ah, indeed! Has there been an accident?"

"Alas, yes!" said the rabbit, sorrowfully. "A great

calamity. We shall not recover from it in years. A thousand jumps from here a house for human beings has been built — a big, big house — and there those creatures with dogs have come to live. Fully seven members of my family have perished through their deeds, and three times as many more have been bereft of their homes. And matters are still worse with the Mouse and the Mole families. And the Toads have suffered heavily. So we have gotten up a festival for the benefit of the surviving relatives. Everybody does what he can. I gave my hole. One ought to have something to spare for his fellow-creatures.”

The compassionate rabbit sighed and, pulling a long ear over his head with his right forepaw, wiped a tear out of his eye. His ear was his handkerchief.

Then something rustled in the grass, and a stout, clumsy figure came scrabbling up to the hole.

“Look!” said Windekind. “Here comes Father Toad — hopping along.”

Then followed a pun at the toad’s expense.

But the toad paid no attention to the jest. His name furnished occasion for frequent jokes. Composedly he laid down by the entrance a full ear of corn, neatly folded in a dry leaf, and then he climbed dexterously over the back of the rabbit into the hole.

“May we go in?” asked Johannes, who was full of curiosity. “I will give something, too!”

He remembered that he still had a biscuit in his pocket — a little round biscuit of Huntley and Palmer’s. As he pulled it out he noticed for the first time how small he had become. He could scarcely lift it with both hands, and could not understand how his pocket had contained it.

“That is very rare and expensive,” said the rabbit. “It is a costly gift.”

The entrance was respectfully made free to them both. It was dark in the cave, and Johannes let Windekind go in front. Soon, they saw a pale-green light approaching. It

was a glow-worm, who obligingly offered to light the way for them.

"It promises to be a very pleasant evening," said the glow-worm, as he led them on. "There are a great many guests. You are elves, I should say. Is it not so?" With these words, the glow-worm glanced at Johannes somewhat suspiciously.

"You may announce us as elves," replied Windekind.

"Do you know that your king is at the party?" continued the glow-worm.

"Is Oberon here? That gives me a great deal of pleasure," exclaimed Windekind. "I know him personally."

"Oh!" said the glow-worm. "I did not know I had the honor to . . ." and his light nearly went out from fright. "Yes, His Majesty much prefers the open air, but he is always ready to perform a charitable act. This is going to be a most brilliant affair!"

It was indeed the case. The main room in the rabbit cave was splendidly decorated. The floor had been trodden smooth, and strewn with fragrant thyme. Directly in front of the entrance a bat was hanging, head downward. He called out the names of the guests, and served at the same time as a measure of economy for a curtain. The walls of the room were tastefully adorned with dry leaves, spider-webs and tiny, suspended bats. Innumerable glow-worms crept in and out of these, and all around the ceiling; and they made a most beautiful, ever-changing illumination. At the end of the chamber was a throne, built of bits of phosphorescent wood. It was a charming spectacle.

There were many guests. Johannes felt himself rather out of place in the strange crowd, and drew close to Windekind. He saw queer things there. A mole was chatting with a field-mouse about the handsome decorations. In a corner sat two fat toads, nodding their heads at each other, and bewailing the continued dry weather. A frog, arm in arm with a lizard, attempted a promenade. Matters went badly with him, for he was timid and nervous, and every once in a

while he jumped too far, thus doing damage to the wall decorations.

On the throne sat Oberon, the elf-king, encircled by a little retinue of elves. These looked down rather disdainfully upon their surroundings. The king himself was most royal in his affability, and conversed in a friendly way with various guests. He had come from a journey in the Orient, and wore a strange garment of brightly colored flower-petals. Flowers like that do not grow here, thought Johannes. On his head rested a deep blue flower-cup, which was still as fragrant as though it had just been picked. In his hand was his sceptre — the stamen of a lotus-flower.

All present were quietly lauding his goodness. He had praised the moonlight on the dunes, and had said that the glow-worms here were almost as beautiful as the fireflies of the Orient. He had pleasantly overlooked the wall decorations, and a mole, even, had noticed that he nodded approvingly.

"Come with me," said Windekind. "I will present you." And they pressed forward to the place where the king sat.

When Oberon recognized Windekind, he greeted him joyfully, and gave him a kiss. At that the guests whispered to one another, and the elves threw envious glances at the pair. The two plump toads in the corner mumbled together something about "fawning and flattering," and "not lasting long," and then nodded very significantly to each other.

Windekind talked with Oberon for a long time in a strange language, and then beckoned to Johannes to come closer.

"Give me your hand, Johannes," said the king. "Windekind's friends are mine also. Whenever I can I will help you, and I will give you a token of our alliance."

Oberon released from the chain about his neck a little gold key, and gave it to Johannes who took it respectfully and held it shut close in his hand.

"That little key may be your fortune," said the king. "It fits a golden chest which contains a precious treasure. Who

holds that chest I cannot say, but you must search for it zealously. If you remain good friends with me and with Wind-kind — steadfast and true — you will surely succeed." With that, the elf-king inclined his beautiful head, cordially, while Johannes, overflowing with happiness, expressed his thanks.

At this moment, three frogs, who were sitting together upon a little mound of damp moss, began to sing the introduction to a slow waltz, and partners were taken for the dance. Those who did not dance were lined along the side walls by the master of ceremonies — a lively, fussy little lizard — to the great vexation of the two toads who complained that they could not see. Then the dancing began.

And it was so comical! Every one danced in his own way, and fancied, of course, that he danced better than any one else. The mice and frogs sprang high up on their hind feet, and an old rat whirled round so wildly that all the dancers retreated before him. A fat tree-slug took a turn with a mole, but soon gave it up, under pretense that she was taken with a stitch in the side. The real reason was that she could not dance very well.

However, everything moved on seriously and ceremoniously. It was a matter of conscience with them, and all looked anxiously toward the king to find a sign of approval upon his countenance. But the king was afraid of causing discontent, and looked very sedate. His followers considered it beneath them to take part in the dancing.

Johannes had contained himself well, through all this seriousness, but when he saw a tiny toad whirling around with a tall lizard, who now and then lifted the unhappy toad high up off the floor and described a half circle with her in the air, he burst out into a merry laugh.

Then there was consternation. The music stopped and the king looked round with a troubled air. The master of ceremonies flew in full speed up to the laughter, and urgently besought him to conduct himself with more decorum.

"Dancing is a serious matter," said he, "and nothing at all

to be laughed at. This is a dignified company, who are dancing not merely for the fun of it. Every one was doing his best, and no one wished to be laughed at. That was very rude. More than that, this is a mourning feast — a sorrowful occasion. One should conduct himself respectably here, and not behave as though he were among human beings."

Johannes was frightened at that. Moreover, he saw hostile looks. His familiarity with the king had made him many enemies. Windekind led him to one side.

"We would better go away," he whispered. "You have made a mess of it again. That is the way when one is brought up among human beings."

Hastily, they slipped out under the bat-wing portière, and entered the dim passage. The polite glow-worm was waiting for them.

"Have you had a good time?" he asked. "Did King Oberon speak with you?"

"Oh, yes. It was a jolly festival," said Johannes. "Do you have to stay here all the time, in this dark passage?"

"That is my own choice," said the glow-worm, in a bitter, mournful voice. "I care no more for vanities."

"Come," said Windekind, "you do not mean that!"

"It is just as I say. Formerly — formerly there was a time when I, too, went to feasts, and danced, and kept up with such frivolities; but now I am purified through suffering, now. . . ." And he became so agitated that his light went out again. Fortunately they were near the outlet, and the rabbit, hearing them coming, moved a little to one side, so that the moonlight shone in.

As soon as they were outside by the rabbit, Johannes said: "Will you not tell us your history, Glow-worm?"

"Alas!" sighed the glow-worm, "it is a sad and simple story. It will not amuse you."

"Tell us! Tell us, all the same!" they cried.

"Well, then, you know that we glow-worms are very peculiar beings. Yes, I believe no one would contradict

that we glow-worms are the most highly gifted of all who live."

"Why? I do not know that," said the rabbit.

At this, the glow-worm asked disdainfully, "Can you give light?"

"No, indeed, I cannot," the rabbit was obliged to confess.

"Now *we* give light — all of us. And we can make it shine or can extinguish it. Light is the best gift of Nature, and to make light is the highest achievement of any living being. Ought any one then to contest our precedence? Moreover, we little fellows have wings, and can fly for miles."

"I cannot do that, either," humbly admitted the rabbit.

"Through the divine gift of light which we have," continued the glow-worm, "other creatures stand in awe of us, and no bird will attack us. Only one animal — the human being — the basest of all, chases us, and carries us off. He is the most detestable monster in creation!"

At this sally Johannes looked at Windekind as though he did not understand. But Windekind smiled, and motioned to him to be silent.

"Once, I flew gaily around among the shrubs, like a bright will-o'-the-wisp. In a moist, lonely meadow on the bank of a ditch there lived one whose existence was inseparably linked with my own happiness. She sparkled beautifully in her light emerald-green as she crept about in the grass, and my young heart was enraptured. I circled about her, and did my best, by making my light play, to attract her attention. Gratefully, I saw that she had perceived me, and demurely extinguished her own light. Trembling with emotion, I was on the point of folding my wings and sinking down in rapture beside my radiant loved one, when the air was filled with an awful noise. Dark figures approached. They were human beings. In terror, I took flight. They chased me, and struck at me with big black things. But my wings went faster than their clumsy legs."

"When I returned —"

Here the narrator's voice failed him. After an instant of deep emotion, during which the three listeners maintained a respectful silence, he continued:

"You may already have surmised it. My tender bride — the brightest, most glowing of all — she had disappeared; kidnapped by cruel human beings. The still, dewy grass-plot was trampled, and her favorite place by the ditch was dark and deserted. I was alone in the world."

Here the impressionable rabbit once again pulled down an ear, and wiped a tear from his eye.

"Since that time I have been a different creature. I have an aversion for all idle pleasures. I think only of her whom I have lost, and of the time when I shall see her again."

"Really! Do you still hope to?" said the rabbit, rejoiced.

"I more than hope — I am certain. In heaven I shall see my beloved again."

"But —" the rabbit objected.

"Bunnie," said the glow-worm, gravely, "I can understand that one who was obliged to grope about in the dark might doubt, but when one can see, with his own eyes! That puzzles me. There!" said the glow-worm, gazing reverently up at the star-dotted skies; "there I behold them — all my forefathers, all my friends, and her, too, more gloriously radiant than when here upon earth. Ah, when shall I be able to rise up out of this lower life, and fly to her who beckons me so winsomely? When, ah, when?"

With a sigh, the glow-worm turned away from his listeners and crept back again into the dark passage.

"Poor creature!" said the rabbit. "I hope he is right."

"I hope so too," added Johannes.

"I have my doubts," said Windekind, "but it was very touching."

"Dear Windekind," began Johannes, "I am very tired and sleepy."

"Then come close to me, and I will cover you with my mantle."

Windekind took off his little blue mantle and spread it over Johannes and himself.

So they lay down on the gentle slope, in the fragrant moss, with their arms about each other's neck.

"Your heads lie rather low," said the rabbit. "Will you rest them against me?"

They did so.

"Good-night, Mother!" said Windekind to the moon.

Then Johannes shut the little gold key tight in his hand, pressed his head against the downy coat of the good rabbit, and fell fast asleep.

III

WHERE is he, Presto? — Where is he? What a fright to wake up in the boat, among the reeds, all alone, the master gone and not a trace of him! It is something to be alarmed about.

And how long you have been running, barking nervously, trying to find him, poor Presto! How could you sleep so soundly and not notice the little master get out of the boat? Otherwise, you would have wakened as soon as he made the least move.

You could scarcely find the place where he landed, and here in the downs you are all confused. That nervous sniffing has not helped a bit. Oh, despair! The master gone — not a sign of him. Find him, Presto, find him!

See! straight before you on the hillside. Is not that a little form lying there? Look! look!

For an instant the little dog stood motionless, straining his gaze out into the distance. Then suddenly he stretched out his head, and raced — flew with all the might of his four little paws toward that dark spot on the hillside.

And when it proved to be the grievously wanted little master, he could not find a way to fully express his joy and thankfulness. He wagged his tail, his entire little body quivering with joy — he jumped, yelped, barked, and then pushed his little cold nose against the face of his long-sought friend, and licked and sniffed all over it.

“Cuddle down, Presto, in your basket,” said Johannes, only half awake.

How stupid of the master! There was no basket there, as any one could see.

Very, very slowly the day began to break in the mind of the little sleeper.

Presto's sniffings he was used to — every morning. But dream-figures of elves and moonshine still lingered in his soul

as the morning mists cling to the landscape. He feared that the chill breath of the dawn might chase them away. "Eyes fast shut," thought he, "or I shall see the clock and the wall-paper, just as ever."

But he was not lying right. He felt there was no covering over him. Slowly and cautiously he opened his eyelids a very little way.

Bright light. Blue sky. Clouds.

Then Johannes opened his eyes wide and said: "Is it really true?"

Yes, he lay in the middle of the dunes. The cheerful sunshine warmed him, he breathed the fresh morning air, and in the distance a fine mist skirted the woods. He saw only the tall beech tree beside the pond, and the roof of his house rising above the foliage. Bees and beetles hummed about him; above him sang the ascending skylark; from far away came the sound of barking dogs, and the rumble of the distant town. It was all as plain as day.

But what had he dreamed and what not? Where was Windekind? And where was the rabbit?

He could see neither of them. Only Presto, who sat up against him as close as possible, watching him expectantly.

"Could I have been sleep-walking?" murmured Johannes, softly.

Beside him was a rabbit-hole. But there were a great many such in the dunes. He sat up straight, so as to give it a good look. What was it he felt in his tightly shut hand?

A thrill ran through him from the crown of his head to his feet as he opened his hand. There lay a bright little gold key.

For a time he sat speechless.

"Presto," said he then, while the tears sprang to his eyes, "Presto, then it *is* true!"

Presto sprang up and tried, by barking, to make it clear to his master that he was hungry and wanted to go home.

To the house? Johannes had not thought of that, and

cared little to return. But soon he heard different voices calling his name. Then he began to realize that his behavior would be considered neither kind nor courteous; and that, for a long time to come, there would be no friendly words in store for him.

For an instant, at the first trouble, his tears of joy were very nearly turned into those of fear and regret. But when he thought about Windekind, who now was his friend — his friend and confidant — of the elf-king's gift, and of the glorious, indisputable truth of all that had occurred, he took his way home, calm and prepared for anything.

But the meeting was more difficult than he expected. He had not fully anticipated the fear and distress of the household over his absence. He was urged to promise solemnly that he never again would be so naughty and imprudent.

"I cannot do so," said he, resolutely. They were surprised at that. He was interrogated, coaxed, threatened; but he thought of Windekind and remained stubborn. What could it matter if only he held Windekind's friendship — and what would he not be willing to suffer for Windekind's sake! He pressed the little key close to his breast, and shut his lips together, while he answered every question with a shrug of his shoulders. "I cannot promise," said he, again.

But his father said: "It is a serious matter with him — we will let him be, now. Something unusual must have happened. Sometime, he will tell us about it."

Johannes smiled, silently ate his bread and butter, and then slipped away to his little bedroom. There, he snipped off a bit of the curtain cord, strung his precious key upon it, and hung it around his neck, on his bare breast. Then, comforted, he went to school.

It went very badly that day at school. He knew none of his lessons, and paid absolutely no attention. His thoughts flew continually to the pond, and to the marvelous happenings of the evening before. He could scarcely believe that a friend of the elf-king could again be obliged to figure sums, and conjugate verbs.

But it had all truly been, and not one of those around him **knew** anything about it. No one could believe or understand — not even the master — no matter how fierce he looked, nor **how** scornfully he called Johannes a lazy dog. He endured **the** angry comments with resignation and performed the tasks **which** his absent-mindedness brought upon him.

"They have not the least idea of it. They may rail at me **as** much as they please. I shall remain Windekind's friend, **and** Windekind is worth more to me than all of them put together; yes, master and all."

That was not respectful of Johannes. But after all the **hard** things he had heard about them the evening before, his esteem for his fellow-creatures had not been increased.

More than that, he was not sensible enough to put his wisdom to the best use; or, rather, to keep silent.

When his master stated that human beings only were gifted by God with reasoning powers, and were placed as rulers over all the other animals, he began to laugh. That cost him a bad mark, and a severe rebuke. And when his seat-mate read aloud from his exercise-book the following sentence: "The sun is very old — she is older than my cross old aunt," Johannes instantly cried out, "*He* is older!"

Everybody laughed at him, and the master, astonished at such amazing stupidity, as he called it, made Johannes remain after school to write out this sentence a hundred times: "The age of my aunt is very great, the age of the sun is greater; but the greatest thing of all is my amazing stupidity."

His schoolmates had all disappeared, and Johannes sat alone writing in the great school-room. The sun shone gaily in, lighting up a thousand motes on the way, and forming on the white-washed walls great splashes of light which, with the passing hours, crept slowly forward. The teacher had gone away, and shut the door behind him with a bang. Johannes was already on the fifty-second "age of my aunt," when a nimble little mouse, with silky ears, and little black beads of eyes, came out of the farthest corner of the room and ran

without a sound along by the wall. Johannes kept as still as death, not to frighten away the pretty creature. It was not afraid, and came up close to where he was sitting. Then, peering round a moment with its bright keen little eyes, it sprang lightly up — one jump to the bench, the second to the desk on which Johannes was writing.

"Hey!" said he, half to himself, "but you are a plucky little mouse!"

"I do not know whom I should be afraid of," said a mite of a voice; and the mouse showed his little teeth as if he were laughing.

Johannes had already become used to many wonderful things, but this made him open his eyes wide. In the middle of the day, and in school! It was past all belief.

"You need not be afraid of me," said he, softly — for fear of startling the mouse. "Have you come from Windekind?"

"I came just to say to you that the teacher is quite right, and that you roundly deserved your punishment."

"But Windekind said that the sun was our father."

"Yes, but it was not necessary to let anybody else know it. What have human beings to do with it? You must never speak of such delicate matters to them — they are too coarse. A human being is an astonishingly cruel and clumsy creature, who would prefer to seize and trample to death whatever came within his reach. We mice have had experience of that."

"But, Mousie, why do you stay in this neighborhood? Why do you not go far away — to the woods?"

"Alas! we cannot do that now. We are too much accustomed to town food. Provided one is prudent and always takes care to avoid their traps and their heavy feet, it becomes possible to endure human beings. Fortunately, we still retain our nimbleness. The worst of it is that human beings help out their own clumsiness by covenanting with the cat. That is a great calamity, but in the woods there are owls and hawks, and we should all certainly perish there. Now, Johannes, remember my advice. There comes the teacher!"

"Mousie, Mousie! Do not go away! Ask Windekind what

I must do with my key. I have hung it around my neck, on my bare breast. But Saturday I have to take a bath, and I am so afraid somebody will see it. Tell me, Mousie dear, where I can safely hide it."

"In the ground — always in the ground. Everything is safest there. Shall I take, and keep it?"

"No, not here, at school!"

"Bury it then, out in the dunes. I will tell my cousin, the field-mouse, that he must keep watch of it."

"Thank you, Mousie."

Tramp! tramp! The master was coming. In the time it took Johannes to dip his pen, the mouse had disappeared. The master himself, who was impatient to go home, excused Johannes from the forty-eight remaining lines.

For two long days Johannes lived in constant fear. He was closely watched, and no opportunity was allowed him for escaping to the dunes. Friday came, and he was still carrying around that precious key. The following evening he must take his weekly bath; the key would be discovered and taken away from him. He grew stiff with fear at the thought of it. He dared not hide it in the house — nor in the garden — no place seemed to him safe enough.

It was Friday afternoon and the twilight began to fall. Johannes sat before his bedroom window, looking wistfully out over the green shrubs of the garden to the distant dunes.

"Windekind, Windekind, help me!" he whispered, anxiously.

There was a gentle rustling of wings near him, then came the fragrance of lilies-of-the-valley, and suddenly he heard the sweet, familiar voice.

Windekind sat near him on the window-seat, making the little lily-bells swing on their slender stalk.

"At last! Have you come? I have longed for you so!" said Johannes.

"Come with me, Johannes; we will go and bury your key."

"I cannot," said Johannes, with a sigh.

But Windekind took him by the hand, and, light as the

feathery seed of a dandelion, he was drifting away through the still evening air.

"Windekind," said Johannes as they went, "I think so much of you! I believe I would willingly give up every human being for you. Presto, even."

"And Simon?" said Windekind.

"Oh, it cannot make much difference to Simon whether I like him or not. He thinks such things childish, I believe. Simon cares only for the fishwoman; and not even for her, save when he is hungry. Do you believe, Windekind, that Simon is an ordinary cat?"

"No! He has been a human being."

Buz-z-z-z! Just then a big May-bug flew against Johannes.

"Cannot you look out for yourself better than that?" grumbled the May-bug. "H'm! You elfin baggage! You fly as if you owned all the air there was. You have learned that from the do-nothings who only just fly round and round for their own pleasure. One who always does his duty, like me — who always seeks food, and eats as hard as he can, is put out by such actions." And away he flew, buzzing loudly.

"Is he vexed because we are not eating anything?" asked Johannes.

"Yes, that is May-bug fashion. Among the May-bugs it is considered the highest duty to eat a great deal. Shall I tell you the story of a young May-bug?"

"Yes, do, Windekind."

"He was a fine, young May-bug who had only just crept out of the sod. What a surprise it was! For four long years he had been under the dark ground, waiting for the first warm evening. When he got his head up out of the clods and saw all that foliage, and the waving grass, and the singing birds, he was greatly perplexed. He did not know what to do. He touched the near-by grass blades all over with his feelers, thrusting them out in fan shape. From this he perceived, Johannes, that he was a male. He was very handsome in his way — with shining black legs, a plump, powdered after-part,

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and a breastplate that gleamed like a mirror. Happily, he soon discovered, not far away, another May-bug — not quite so handsome, but who had flown out a full day earlier and thus was of age. Quite modestly, because he was still so young, he hailed this other one.

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“‘What do you want, little friend?’ said the second one condescendingly, observing that it was a novice: ‘Do you want to inquire the way?’

“‘No, but you see,’ said the younger, politely, ‘I do not know what I ought to be doing here. What does one do when he is a May-bug?’

“‘Indeed,’ said the other, ‘do you not know that? Well, that is excusable. Once I did not know. Listen, and I will tell you. The chief concern of a May-bug’s life is to eat. Not far from this is a delicious linden hedge that was put there for us to eat from as busily as possible.’

“‘Who planted the linden hedge there?’ asked the young beetle.

“‘Well, a great creature who means well by us. Every morning he comes along the hedge, picks out those that have eaten the most, and takes them with him to a splendid house where a bright light shines, and where all the May-bugs are very happy together. But those who keep flying about the whole night instead of eating are caught by the bat.’

“‘Who is that?’ asked the novice.

“‘A fearful monster with sharp teeth, that all of a sudden comes flying after us, and crunches us up with a horrible crack.’ As the beetle said this, they heard above them a shrill squeaking which pierced through to the marrow. ‘Hey! There he is!’ exclaimed the older one. ‘Look out for him, my young friend. Be thankful that I have warned you in good time. You have a long night before you — make the best of it. The less you eat the greater the chance of your being devoured by the bat. Only those who choose a serious calling in life can enter the great house with the bright light. Bear that in mind! A serious calling!’

"Then the beetle, who was a whole day the older, scabbled away among the blades of grass, leaving the other behind, greatly impressed. Do you understand what a calling is, Johannes? No? Well, neither did the young beetle know. It had something to do with eating, he knew, but how was he to get to the linden hedge?

"Close beside him stood a slim, strong grass-stem swaying gently in the evening wind. He grasped it, and hugged it tightly with his six little crooked feet. It seemed as tall as a giant viewed from below, and fearfully steep. But the May-bug was determined to reach the very tip of it.

"This is a calling,' he thought, and he began to climb, pluckily. It was slow work — he often slipped back; but still he made progress, and at last, when he had climbed to the tip-top and was swinging and swaying there, he felt content and happy. What a view! It seemed to him as if he overlooked the world. How blissful it was to be surrounded, on all sides, by the air! He breathed it in eagerly. How marvelously it cheered him up! He would go still higher!

"In ecstasy he lifted up his shields, and made his filmy wings quiver. Higher he would go! Higher! Again he fluttered his wings — his feet let loose the grass-stem, and — oh, joy! — He was flying, free and clear, in the still, warm evening air!"

"And then?" asked Johannes.

"The continuation is not cheerful. I will tell it you a little later."

They had flown away over the pond. A pair of belated white butterflies fluttered along with them.

"Where are you going, elves?" they asked.

"To the big wild-rose that blossoms on yonder hill."

"We will go, too! We will go, too!"

In the distance, the rose-bush with its many pale-yellow satiny flowers was already visible. The buds were red, and the open roses showed little stripes of the same color, in token of the time when they still were buds.

In solitary calm, this sweet wild-rose bloomed, and filled

the region with its marvelous fragrance. So delicious is this that the dune-elves live upon it alone.

The butterflies fluttered up to it, and kissed flower after flower.

"We come to entrust a treasure to you," said Windekind. "Will you take care of it for us?"

"Why not? why not?" whispered the wild-rose. "Watching does not tire me, and I do not think to go away from here, if no one carries me off. And I have sharp thorns."

Then came the field-mouse — the cousin of the mouse at the school. He dug a passage under the roots of the rose-bush, and pulled in the little key.

"If you want it back again, you must call on me. And then the rose need not be harmed."

The rose interlocked its thorny twigs close over the entrance, and took a solemn oath to guard the trust. The butterflies were witnesses.

The next morning, Johannes woke up in his own little bed, with Presto, the clock, and the wall-hangings. The cord around his neck, and the little key upon it, had disappeared.

IV

"OH, boys, boys! How dreadfully tedious it is in summer!" sighed one of the three big stoves which stood together, fretting, in a dark corner of the garret in the old house. "For weeks I have not seen a living soul nor heard a sensible word. And that emptiness within. It is horrible!"

"I am full of spider-webs," said the other. "In winter that would not happen."

"And I am so dusty that I shall be shamed to death next winter when the black man appears, as Van Alphen says." This bit of learning the third stove had gotten, of course, from Johannes, as he sat before the hearth winters, reciting verses.

"You must not speak so disrespectfully of the Smith," said the first stove — which was the eldest. "It pains me."

And a number of shovels and tongs also, which lay here and there on the floor, wrapped in paper to keep them from rusting, expressed freely their indignation at the frivolous remark.

Suddenly, they all stopped talking; for the trap-door was lifted, a ray of light darted to the far corner, exposing the entire dusty company, to their surprise and confusion.

It was Johannes whose coming had disturbed their talk. He had always enjoyed a visit to the garret; and now, after all the recent happenings, he often went there to find quiet and seclusion. There, too, closed with a shutter was a window, which looked out over the hillside. It was a keen delight to open that shutter suddenly, and after the mysterious gloom of the garret, to see before him all at once the wide-spread, clearly lighted landscape, framed by the gently undulating lines of the hills.

Three weeks had passed away since that Friday evening, and Johannes had not seen nor heard anything of his friend. His little key was now gone, and there was nothing to prove to him that he had not been dreaming. Often, he could not reason

away the fear that all had been only imagination. He kept his own counsel, and his father remarked with anxiety that Johannes, since that night in the dunes, had certainly been ill. Johannes, however, was only longing for Windekind.

"Ought not he to care as much for me as I do for him?" he mused, while he leaned against the garret window and gazed out over the verdant, flowery garden. "And why does he not come oftener, and stay longer? If *I* could! . . . But perhaps he has other friends, and cares more for them than for me? I have no other friend — not one. I care only for him — so much, oh, so much!"

Then he saw defined against the deep blue sky a flock of six white doves which wheeled with flapping wings above the house. It seemed as if one thought impelled them, so swiftly and simultaneously, again and again, they altered their direction, as if to enjoy to the full the sea of sunlight in which they were circling.

All at once they flew toward Johannes' little attic-window, and, with much fluttering and flapping of wings, alighted on the gutter. There they cooed, and bustled back and forth, with little, mincing steps. One of them had a little red feather in his wing. He tugged and pulled at it until he held it in his beak. Then he flew up to Johannes and gave it to him.

Johannes had scarcely taken it when he felt that he had become as light and fleet as one of the doves. He stretched himself out, up flew the flock of doves, and Johannes soared in their midst, through the free, open air and the clear sunshine. Nothing was around him but the pure blue, and the bright gleaming of the white dove-wings.

They flew over the garden toward the woods, whose tree-tops were waving in the distance like the swell of a green sea. Johannes looked down below, and saw his father sitting at the open window of the living-room. Simon sat on the window-sill, his forepaws folded, basking in the sunshine. "Can they see me?" he thought; but he did not dare call to them.

Presto was tearing through the garden paths, sniffing about every shrub, behind every wall, and scratching against the door of every hot-house or out-building, trying to find his master.

"Presto! Presto!" cried Johannes. The dog looked up, and began to wag his tail and whimper, plaintively.

"I am coming back, Presto. Watch!" cried Johannes, but he was too far away.

They swept over the woods, and the crows flew croaking out of the high tree-tops where their nests were. It was mid-summer, and the odor of the blossoming lindens streamed up from the green woods below them.

In an empty nest at the top of a tall linden tree sat Windekind with the wreath of wind-flowers upon his head. He nodded to Johannes.

"Is that you? That is good," said he. "I sent for you. Now we can stay together a long while — if you would like to."

"Indeed, I would like to," said Johannes.

Then he thanked the kind doves who had brought him thither, and dropped down with Windekind into the woods.

It was cool and shady there. The golden thrush was fluting his strain — nearly always the very same, but yet a little different.

"Poor bird!" said Windekind. "He was once a bird-of-paradise. That you can still see by his strange, yellow feathers; but he was given another covering and expelled from Paradise. There is a word which can bring back again his former glorious covering, and restore him to Paradise, but he has forgotten it. Day after day he tries to find that word. He sings something like it, but it is not the right word."

Countless flies were glistening like floating crystals in the sunbeams that fell through the dark foliage. Listening acutely, one could hear their buzzing like a great, monotonous concert, filling the entire forest. It was as if the sunbeams sang.

Thick, dark-green moss covered the ground, and Johannes

had become so small again that it appeared to him like a new-grown woods at the bottom of the great forest. What elegant little stems and how closely they grew! It was difficult to pass between them, and the moss-woods seemed dreadfully large.

Then they came upon an ant-path. Hundreds of ants ran busily to and fro, some carrying bits of wood, little leaves, or blades of grass in their jaws. There was such a tumult that it almost made Johannes dizzy. They were all so busy it was a long time before one of the ants would stop to speak with them. At last they found an old ant who had been stationed to keep watch over the small plant-lice from which the ants draw their honey-dew. Since his small herd was quiet he could devote a little time to the strangers, and show them the great nest. It was situated at the foot of an old tree-trunk, was very large, and had hundreds of entrances and little chambers. The plant-louse herder gave explanations, and led the visitors around everywhere, till they came to the cells of the young, where the larvæ crept out of their white cocoons. Johannes was amazed and delighted.

The old ant said that they were living under great stress on account of the military campaign which was about to be executed. They were going, with a huge force, to attack another ant colony not far away; to destroy the nest, and to steal or kill the larvæ. To accomplish this, they would need all the help possible, and thus they must first settle the most urgent affairs.

"What is the reason for this military expedition?" asked Johannes. "It does not seem nice."

"Indeed," said the herder, "it is a very fine and praiseworthy enterprise! You must know that it is the Fighting-Ants we are going to attack. We are going to extirpate their species, and that is a very good deed."

"Are not you Fighting-Ants, then?"

"Certainly not! What makes you think so? We are Peace-Ants."

"Then what does that mean?"

"Do you not know? I will explain. Once, all the ants were continually fighting — not a day passed without great slaughter. Then there came a good, wise ant who thought it would save a great deal of trouble if all the ants would agree to fight no more.

"When he said that, they all found it very strange; and what did they do but begin to bite him into pieces. Later, came still other ants who were of the very same opinion. These also were bitten into mince-meat. But so many of them kept coming that the biting-up became too much work for the others.

"Then they named themselves Peace-Ants, and all agreed that the first Peace-Ant was right. Whoever dissented was, in his turn, bitten up. Thus, nearly all the ants nowadays have become Peace-Ants, and the remnants of the first Peace-Ant have been preserved with great care and respect. We have the head — the authentic head. We have laid waste twelve other colonies, and have murdered the ants who pretended to have the genuine head. Now, there are only four such colonies left. They call themselves Peace-Ants, but they are really Fighting-Ants; because, you see, we have the true head, and the Peace-Ant had but one head. We are going, one of these days, to stamp out the thirteenth colony. You see now, that this is a good work."

"Yes, indeed," said Johannes, "it is very . . . remarkable."

Really he had become a little afraid, and felt more comfortable when they had taken their leave of the obliging herder and, far away from the ant colony, were resting awhile on a swaying grass-blade, in the shadow of a graceful fern-leaf,

"Whoo!" sighed Johannes, "that was a stupid, blood-thirsty set."

Windekind laughed, and swung up and down on his grass-blade.

"Oh," said he, "you must not call them stupid. Human beings go to the ants to learn wisdom from them."

Thus Windekind showed Johannes all the wonders of the

woods. They flew together to the birds in the tree-tops, and in the close hedges; went down into the clever little dwellings of the moles, and saw the bees' nest in the old tree-trunk.

Finally, they came to an open place surrounded with undergrowth. The honeysuckle grew there in great abundance. It twined its wanton tendrils over all the shrubs, and its fragrant garlands adorned the luxuriant foliage. A flock of tomtits hopped and fluttered among the leaves, and chirped and chattered clamorously.

"Let us stay a little longer," said Johannes. "It is delightful here."

"Good," said Windekind. "Then you will see some more comical things."

Little blue-bells were growing in the grass. Johannes went up to one of them, and began to chat about the bees and the butterflies. These were good friends of the blue-bell, and so the conversation flowed smoothly on.

What was that? A great shadow passed over the grass, and something like a white cloud descended upon the blue-bell. Johannes scarcely had time to get out of the way. He flew to Windekind, who was sitting high up in a honeysuckle. From thence he saw that the white cloud was a handkerchief, and just then a portly woman sat down hard upon the handkerchief, and upon the poor little blue-bell that was under it.

He had not time to lament, for the sound of voices and of cracking branches filled the open place, and a crowd of people approached.

"Now we are going to have a laugh," said Windekind.

There they came — human beings. The women with baskets and umbrellas in hand; the men with high, stiff black hats on. Almost all the men were very, very black. In the sunny, green forest, they looked like great, ugly ink spots on a splendid picture.

Bushes were thrust rudely aside, and flowers were trampled under foot. Many more white handkerchiefs were

spread over the meek grass; and the patient mosses, sighing, yielded to the weight that bore them down, and feared never to recover from the shock.

The smoke of cigars curled up over the honeysuckle vines, spitefully driving away the delicate fragrance of their flowers; and loud voices scattered the merry tomtits, that, chirping their fright and indignation, sought refuge in the nearest trees.

One man rose up from the crowd, and went to stand on a little mound. He had long, light hair, and a pale face. He said something, and then all the people opened their mouths frightfully wide and began to sing so hard that the crows flew up, croaking, from their high nests, and the inquisitive rabbits that had come to the edge of the glade, just to look on, took fright and started on a run, and kept it up a quarter of an hour after they were safe again in the dunes.

Windekind laughed, and whisked away the cigar smoke with a fern-leaf. The tears came into Johannes' eyes, but not from the smoke.

"Windekind," said he, "I want to go away — it is so ugly and horrid here."

"No, we must stay a while longer. You will laugh; it is going to be still more comical."

The singing was over, and the pale man began to speak. He shouted, so that all could hear, but what he said sounded very kind. He called the people brothers and sisters, and spoke of glorious nature, and the wonders of creation, of God's sunshine and of the dear birds and flowers. . . .

"What is that?" asked Johannes. "Why does he speak of those things? Does he know you? Is he a friend of yours?"

Windekind shook his garlanded head disdainfully.

"He does not know me; still less the sun, the birds, the flowers. Everything he says is false."

The people all listened very attentively. The fat woman who was sitting on the blue-bell began several times to cry, and wiped away her tears with her skirt, because she had not the use of her handkerchief.

The pale man said that God had caused the sun to shine so brightly for the sake of their meeting. Then Windekind laughed and, out of the thick foliage, threw an acorn at his nose.

"He shall find it otherwise," said he. "My father shine for him! How conceited!"

But the pale man was too full of enthusiasm to mind the acorn, which appeared to have fallen out of the sky. He spoke a long time, and the longer the louder. At last he grew purple in the face, clenched his fists, and shouted so loud that the leaves trembled and the grasses waved hither and thither in astonishment. When at last he calmed down, they all began to sing again.

"Fie!" said a blackbird, who had heard the uproar from the top of a high tree. "What a frightful racket! I would rather the cows came into the woods. Just hear that! For shame!"

Now, the blackbird is a critic, and has fine taste.

After the singing, the people brought all sorts of eatables from baskets, boxes, and bags. They spread out papers, and distributed rolls and oranges. Bottles and glasses, too, came to light.

Then Windekind called his allies together, and the siege of the feasting company began.

A gallant frog jumped into the lap of an old lady, close beside the bread she was just about to eat, and remained sitting there, astonished at his own daring. The lady gave a horrible shriek, and stared at the intruder in amazement, without daring to stir. This mettlesome example found imitators. Green caterpillars crept valiantly over hats, handkerchiefs, and rolls, awakening fright and dismay. Big, fat spiders let themselves down glistening threads into the beer glasses, and upon heads or necks, and a loud, continual screaming accompanied their attack. Innumerable small flies assailed the people straight in the face, offering their lives for the good of the cause by tumbling into the food and drink,

and, with their bodies, making it unfit for use. Finally, came multitudes of ants, a hundred at a time, and nipped the enemy in the most unexpected places. Men and women sprang up hurriedly from the long-crushed moss and grass; and the bluebell was liberated through the well-aimed attack of two earwigs upon the ankles of the plump woman. Desperation seized them all; dancing and jumping with the most comical gestures, the people tried to escape from their pursuers. The pale man stood his ground well, and struck out on all sides with a small black stick; till a pair of malicious tomtits, that considered no method of attack too mean, and a wasp, that gave him a sting through his black trousers on the calf of the leg, put him out of the fight.

The jolly sun could no longer keep his countenance, and hid his face behind a cloud. Big rain-drops descended upon the struggling party. Suddenly, as though it had rained down, a forest of big black toadstools appeared. It was the outstretched umbrellas. The women drew their skirts over their heads, exposing white petticoats, white-stockinged ankles, and shoes without heels. Oh, what fun it was for Windekind! He laughed so hard he had to cling to the flower-stem.

Faster and faster fell the rain, and a greyish, glistening veil began to envelop the woods. Water dripped from umbrellas, high hats, and black coats. The coats shone like the shells of the water beetle, while the shoes kissed and smacked on the saturated ground. Then the people gave it up — dropping silently away in little groups, leaving many papers, empty bottles, and orange peels for unsightly tokens of their visit. The little glade in the woods was again solitary, and soon nothing was heard but the monotonous patter of the rain.

"Well, Johannes! Now we have seen human beings, also. Why do you not laugh at them, as well?"

"Oh, Windekind! Are all human beings like that?"

"Some of them are much worse and more ugly. At times they swear and tear and make havoc with everything that is beautiful or admirable. They cut down trees, and put horrid,

square houses in their places. They wantonly trample the flowers, and kill, for the mere pleasure of it, every animal that comes within their reach. In their cities, where they swarm together, everything is dirty and black, and the air is dank and poisonous with stench and smoke. They are completely estranged from Nature and her fellow-creatures. That is why they make such a foolish and sorry figure when they return to them."

"Oh, Windekind! Windekind!"

"Why are you crying, Johannes? You must not cry because you were born among human beings. I love you all the same, and prefer you to everybody else. I have taught you the language of the birds and the butterflies, and how to understand the look of the flowers. The moon knows you, and good, kind Earth loves you as her dearest child. Why should you not be glad, since I am your friend?"

"Oh, Windekind, I am, I am! But then, I have to cry about all those people."

"Why? If it makes you sad, you need not remain with them. You can live here, and always keep me company. We will dwell in the depths of the woods, on the lonely, sunny dunes, or in the reeds by the pond. I will take you everywhere — down under the water among the water-plants, in the palaces of the elves, and in the haunts of the goblins. I will hover with you over fields and forests — over foreign lands and seas. I will have dainty garments spun for you, and wings given you like these I wear. We will live upon the sweetness of the flowers, and dance in the moonlight with the elves. When autumn comes, we will keep pace with the sun, to lands where the tall palms rise, where gorgeous flowers festoon the rocks, and the face of the deep blue sea lies smiling in the sun. And I will always tell you stories. Would you like that, Johannes?"

"Shall I never live with human beings any more?"

"Among human beings there await you endless sorrow, trouble, weariness, and care. Day after day must you toil and

sigh under the burden of your life. They will stab and torture your sensitive soul with their roughness. They will rack and harass you to death. Do you love human beings more than you love me?"

"No, no, Windekind! I will stay with you."

Now he could show how much he cared for Windekind. Yes, for his sake he would leave and forget each and everything — his bedroom, Presto, and his father. Joyfully and resolutely he repeated his wish.

The rain had ceased. From under grey clouds the sunlight streamed over the woods like a bright smile. It touched the wet, shining leaves, the rain-drops which sparkled on every twig and stem, and adorned the spider-webs, stretched over the oak-leaves. From the moist ground below the shrubbery a fine mist languidly rose, bearing with it a thousand sultry, dreamy odors. The blackbird flew to the top of the highest tree, and sang in broken, fervent strains to the sinking sun, as if he would show which song suited best, in this solemn evening calm, as an accompaniment to the falling drops.

"Is not that finer than the noise of human beings, Johannes? Yes, the blackbird knows exactly the right tone to strike. Here everything is in harmony — such perfect harmony you will never find among human beings."

"What is harmony, Windekind?"

"It is the same as happiness. It is that for which all strive. Human beings also. Yet they are like children trying to catch a butterfly. They simply drive it away by their silly efforts."

"Shall I find it here with you?"

"Yes, Johannes; but then you must forget human beings. It is a bad beginning to have been born among human beings; but you are still young. You must put away from you all remembrance of your human life, else it would cause you to err and plunge you into conflicts, perplexities, and misery. It would be with you as with the young May-bug I told you about."

"What else happened to him?"

"He had seen the bright light which the older beetle had spoken of, and could think of nothing better to do than promptly to fly to it. Straight as a string, he flew into a room, and fell into human hands. For three long days he suffered martyrdom. He was put into cardboard boxes, threads were tied to his feet, and he was made to fly. Then he tore himself free, with the loss of a wing and a leg, and finally, creeping helplessly around on the carpet in a vain endeavor to reach the garden, he was crushed by a heavy foot.

"All creatures, Johannes, that roam around in the night are as truly children of the sun as we are. And although they have never seen the shining face of their father, still a dim remembrance ever impels them to anything from which light streams. And thousands of poor creatures of the darkness find a pitiful death through that love for the sun from whom they were long ago cut off and estranged. Thus a mysterious, irresistible tendency brings human beings to destruction in the false phantom of that Great Light which gave them being, but which they no longer understand."

Johannes looked up inquiringly into Windekind's eyes. But they were deep and mysterious — like the dark sky between the stars.

"Do you mean God?" he asked shyly.

"God?" The deep eyes laughed gently. "I know, Johannes, of what you think when you utter that name; of the chair before your bed beside which you make your long prayer every evening; of the green serge curtains of the church window at which you look so often Sunday mornings; of the capital letters of your little Bible; of the church-bag with the long handle; of the wretched singing and the musty atmosphere. What you mean by that name, Johannes, is a ridiculous phantom; instead of the sun, a great oil-lamp where hundreds of thousands of gnats are helplessly stuck fast."

"But what then is the name of the Great Light, Windekind? And to whom must I pray?"

"Johannes, it is the same as if a speck of mold turning

round with the earth should ask me its bearer's name. If there were an answer to your question you would understand it no more than does the earth-worm the music of the spheres. Still, I will teach you how to pray."

Then, with little Johannes, who was musing in silent wonder over his words, Windekind flew up out of the forest, so high that beyond the horizon a long streak of shining gold became visible. On they flew — the fantastically shadowed plain gliding beneath their glance. And the band of light grew broader and broader. The green of the dunes grew dun, the grass looked grey, and strange, pale-blue plants were growing there. Still another high range of hills, a long narrow stretch of sand, and then the wide, awful sea.

That great expanse was blue as far as the horizon, but below the sun flashed a narrow streak of glittering, blinding red.

A long, fleecy margin of white foam encircled the sea, like an ermine border upon blue velvet.

And at the horizon, sky and water were separated by an exquisite, wonderful line. It seemed miraculous; straight, and yet curved, sharp, yet undefined — visible, yet inscrutable. It was like the sound of a harp that echoes long and dreamfully, seeming to die away and yet remaining.

Then little Johannes sat down upon the top of the hill and gazed — gazed long, in motionless silence, until it seemed to him as if he were about to die — as if the great golden doors of the universe were majestically unfolding, and his little soul were drifting toward the first light of Infinity.

And then the tears welled in his wide-open eyes till they shrouded the glory of the sun, and obscured the splendor of heaven and earth in a dim and misty twilight.

"That is the way to pray," said Windekind.

V

DID you ever wander through the woods on a beautiful autumn day, when the sun was shining, calm and bright, upon the richly tinted foliage; when the boughs creaked, and the dry leaves rustled about your feet?

The woods seem so weary. They can only meditate, and live in old remembrances. A blue haze, like a dream, surrounds them with a mysterious beauty, and glistening gossamer floats through the air in idle undulations — like futile, aimless meditations.

Yet, suddenly and unaccountably, out of the damp ground, between moss and dry leaves, rise up the marvelous toadstools; some thick, deformed, and fleshy; others tall and slender with ringed stems and bright-colored hoods. Strange dream-figures of the woods are they!

There may be seen also, on moldering tree-trunks, countless, small white growths with little black tops, as if they had been burnt. Some wise folk consider them a kind of fungus. But Johannes learned better.

"They are little candles. They burn in still autumn nights, and the goblin mannikins sit beside them, and read in little books."

Windekind taught him that, on such a still autumn day, while Johannes dreamly inhaled the faint odor of the forest soil.

"What makes the leaves of the sycamore so spotted with black?"

"Oh, the goblins do that, too," said Windekind. "When they have been writing nights, they throw out in the morning, over the leaves, what is left in their ink bottles. They do not like this tree. Crosses, and poles for contribution bags, are made out of sycamore wood."

Johannes was inquisitive about the busy little goblins, and he made Windekind promise to take him to one of them.

He had already been a long time with Windekind, and he was so happy in his new life that he felt very little regret over his promise to forget all he had left behind. There were no times of anxiety or of loneliness — times when remorse wakens. Windekind never left him, and with him he was at home in any place. He slept peacefully, in the rocking nest of the reed-bird that hung among the green stalks, although the bittern roared and the raven croaked so ominously. He felt no fear on account of pouring rains nor shrieking winds. At such times he took shelter in hollow trees or rabbit-holes, and crept close under Windekind's mantle, and listened to the voice which was telling him stories.

And now he was going to see the goblins.

It was a good day for the visit — so very still. Johannes fancied he could already hear their light little voices, and the tripping of their tiny feet, although it was yet midday.

The birds were nearly all gone — the thrushes alone were feasting on the scarlet berries. One was caught in a snare. There it hung with outstretched wings, struggling until the tightly pinioned little foot was nearly severed. Johannes quickly released it, and with a joyful chirp the bird flew swiftly away.

The toadstools were having a chatty time together.

"Just look at me," said one fat devil-fungus. "Did you ever see anything like it? See how thick and white my stem is, and see how my hood shines! I am the biggest of all. And that in one night!"

"Bah!" said the red fly-fungus. "You are very clumsy — so brown and rough. I sway on my slender stalk like a grass stem. I am splendidly red, like the thrush-berry and gorgeously speckled. I am handsomer than any of you."

"Be still!" said Johannes, who had known them well in former days. "You are both poisonous."

"That is a virtue," said the red fungus.

"Do you happen to be a human being?" grumbled the big fellow, scornfully. "If so, I would like to have you eat me up!"

Johannes did not do that, however. He took little dry twigs, and stuck them into his clumsy hood. That made him look silly, and all the others laughed — among them, a little group of tiny toadstools with small, brown heads, who in a couple of hours had sprung up together, and were jostling one another to get a peep at the world. The devil-fungus was blue with rage. That brought to light his poisonous nature.

Puff-balls raised their round, inflated little heads on four-pointed pedestals. From time to time a cloud of brown powder, of the utmost fineness, flew out of the opening in the round head. Wherever on the moist ground that powder fell, tiny rootlets would interlace in the black earth, and the following year hundreds of new puff-balls would spring up.

"What a beautiful existence!" said they to one another. "The very acme of attainment is to puff powder. What a joy to be able to puff, as long as one lives!"

And with devout consecration they drove the small dust-clouds into the air.

"Are they right, Windekind?"

"Why not? For them, what can be higher? It is fortunate that they long for nothing more, when they can do nothing else."

When night fell, and the shadows of the trees were intermingled in one general obscurity, that mysterious forest life did not cease. The branches cracked and snapped, the dry leaves rustled hither and thither over the grass and in the underwood, and Johannes felt the draft from inaudible wing-strokes, and was conscious of the presence of invisible beings. And now he heard, clearly, whispering voices and tripping footsteps. Look! There, in the dusky depths of the bushes, a tiny blue spark just twinkled, and then went out. Another one, and another! Hush! Listening attentively, he could hear a rustling in the leaves close beside him, by the dark tree-trunk. The blue lights appeared from behind this, and held still at the top.

Everywhere, now, Johannes saw glimmering lights. They

floated through the foliage, danced and skipped along the ground; and yonder was a great, glowing mass like a blue bonfire.

"What kind of fire is that?" asked Johannes. "How splendidly it burns!"

"That is a decayed tree-trunk," said Windekind. Then they went up to a bright little light, which was burning steadily.

"Now I will introduce you to Wistik.* He is the oldest and wisest of the goblins."

Having come up closer, Johannes saw him sitting beside his little candle. By the blue light of this, one could plainly distinguish the wrinkled, grey-bearded face. He was reading aloud, and his eyebrows were knit. On his head he wore a little acorn cap with a tiny feather in it. Before him sat a spider — listening to the reading.

Without lifting his head, the goblin glanced up from the book as the two approached, and raised his eyebrows. The spider crept away. "Good evening," said the goblin. "I am Wistik. Who are you?"

"My name is Johannes. I am very happy to make your acquaintance. What are you reading?"

"This is not intended for your ears," said Wistik. "It is only for spiders."

"Let me have just a peep at it, dear Wistik!" said Johannes.

"I must not. It is the Sacred Book of the spiders. It is in my keeping, and I must never let it out of my hands. I have the Sacred Book of the beetles and the butterflies and the hedgehogs and the moles, and of everything that lives here. They cannot all read, and when they wish to know anything, I read it aloud to them. That is a great honor for me — a position of trust, you know."

The mannikin nodded very seriously a couple of times, and raised a tiny forefinger.

"What were you reading just now?"

"The history of Kribblegauw,* the great hero of the spiders,

* See note, page 520.

who lived a long while ago. He had a web that stretched over three trees, and that caught in it millions of flies in a day. Before Kribblegauw's time, spiders made no webs, and lived on grass and dead creatures; but Kribblegauw was a clever chap, and demonstrated that living things also were created for spider's food. And by difficult calculations, for he was a great mathematician, Kribblegauw invented the artful spider-web. And the spiders still make their webs, thread for thread, exactly as he taught them, only much smaller; for the spider family has sadly degenerated."

"Kribblegauw caught large birds in his web, and murdered thousands of his own children. There was a spider for you! Finally, a mighty storm arose, and dragged Kribblegauw with his web, and the three trees to which it was fastened, away through the air to distant forests, where he is now everlastingly honored because of his nimbleness and blood-thirstiness."

"Is that all true?" asked Johannes.

"It is in this book," said Wistik.

"Do you believe it?"

The goblin shut one eye, and rested his forefinger along the side of his nose.

"Whenever Kribblegauw is mentioned, in the Sacred Books of the other animals, he is called a despicable monster; but that is beyond me."

"Is there a Book of the Goblins, too, Wistik?"

Wistik glanced at Johannes somewhat suspiciously.

"What kind of being are you, really, Johannes? There is something about you so — so human, I should say."

"No, no! Rest assured, Wistik," said Windekind then. "We are elves; but Johannes has seen, formerly, many human beings. You can trust him, however. It will do him no harm."

"Yes, yes, that is well and good; but I am called the wisest of the goblins, and I studied long and hard before I learned what I know. Now I must be prudent with my wisdom. If I tell too much, I shall lose my reputation."

"But in what book, then, do you think the truth is told?"

"I have read much, but I do not believe I have ever read that book. It is not the Book of the Elves, nor the Book of the Goblins. Still, there must be such a book."

"The Book of Human Beings, perhaps?"

"That I do not know, but I should hardly think so, for the Book of Truth ought to bring great peace and happiness. It should state exactly why everything is as it is, so that no one could ask or wish for anything more. Now, I do not believe human beings have got so far as that."

"Oh, no! no!" laughed Windekind.

"Is there really such a book?" asked Johannes, eagerly.

"Yes!" whispered the goblin. "I know it from old, old stories. And hush! I know too, where it is, and who can find it."

"Oh, Wistik, Wistik!"

"Then why have you not yet got it?" asked Windekind.

"Have patience. It will happen all right. Some of the particulars I do not yet know, but I shall soon find it. I have worked for it and sought it all my life. For to him who finds it, life will be an endless autumnal day — blue sky above and blue haze about — but no falling leaves will rustle, no bough will break, and no drops will patter. The shadows will not waver, and the gold on the tree-tops will not fade. What now seems to us light will be as darkness, and what now seems to us happiness will be as sorrow, to him who has read that book. Yes, I know this about it, and sometime I shall find it." The goblin raised his eyebrows very high, and laid his finger on his lips.

"Wistik, if you could only teach me. . . ." began Johannes, but before he could end he felt a heavy gust of wind, and saw, exactly above him, a huge black object which shot past, swiftly and inaudibly.

When he looked round again for Wistik, he caught just a glimpse of a little foot disappearing in a tree-trunk. Zip! — The goblin had dashed into his hole, head first — book and

all. The candles burned more and more feebly, and suddenly went out. They were very queer little candles.

"What was that?" asked Johannes, in a fright, clinging fast to Windekind in the darkness.

"A night-owl," said Windekind.

They were both silent for a while. Then Johannes asked:

"Do you believe what Wistik said?"

"Wistik is not so wise as he thinks he is. He will never find such a book. Neither will you."

"But does it exist?"

"That book exists the same as your shadow exists, Johannes. However hard you run, however carefully you may reach for it, you will never overtake nor grasp it; and, in the end, you will discover that it is yourself you chase. Do not be foolish — forget the goblin's chatter. I will tell you a hundred finer stories. Come with me! We will go to the edge of the woods, and see how our good Father lifts the fleecy, white dew-blankets from the sleeping meadow-lands. Come!"

Johannes went, but he had not understood Windekind's words and he did not follow his advice. And while he watched the dawn of the brilliant autumn day, he was brooding over the book wherein was stated why all is as it is, and softly repeating to himself, "Wistik!"

VI

It seemed to him during the days that followed that it was no longer so merry and cheerful as it had been — in the woods and in the dunes — with Windekind. His thoughts were no longer wholly occupied with what Windekind told or showed him. Again and again he found himself musing over that *book*, but he dared not speak of it. Nothing he looked at now seemed beautiful or wonderful. The clouds were so black and heavy, he feared they might fall upon him. It pained him when the restless autumn winds shook and whipped the poor, tired trees until the pale under sides of the green leaves were upturned, and yellow foliage and dry branches flew up in the air.

What Windekind related gave him no satisfaction. Much of it he did not understand, and whenever he asked one of his old questions he never received a full, clear, satisfactory answer.

Thus he was forced to think again of that book wherein everything stood so clearly and plainly written; and of that ever sunny, tranquil, autumn day which was to follow.

“Wistik! Wistik!”

Windekind heard it.

“Johannes, you will remain a human being, I fear. Even your friendship is like that of human beings. The first one after me to speak to you has carried away your confidence. Alas! My mother was quite right!”

“No, Windekind! But you are so much wiser than Wistik; you are as wise as that book. Why do you not tell me all? See, now! Why does the wind blow through the trees, making them bend and sway? Look! They can bear no more; the finest branches are breaking and the leaves are torn away by hundreds, although they are still so green and fresh. They are so tired, and yet again and again they are shaken and

lashed by this rude and cruel wind. Why is it so? What does the wind want?"

"My poor Johannes. That is human language!"

"Make it be still, Windekind! I like calm and sunshine."

"You ask and wish like a human being; therefore there is neither answer nor fulfilment. If you do not learn better to ask and desire, the autumn day will never dawn for you, and you will become like the thousands of human beings who have spoken to Wistik."

"Are there so many?"

"Yes, thousands. Wistik pretended to be very mysterious, but he is a prater who cannot keep his secret. He hopes to find that book among human beings, and he shares his knowledge with any one who, perhaps, can help him. And so he has already caused a great deal of unhappiness. Many believe him, and search for that book with as much fervor as some do the secret of the art of making gold. They sacrifice everything, and forget all their affairs — even their happiness — and shut themselves up among thick books, and strange implements and materials. They hazard their lives and their health — forget the blue heavens, good, kindly Nature, and even their fellow-beings. Sometimes they find beautiful and useful things, like lumps of gold. These they cast up out of their caves, on the sunny surface of the earth. Yet they do not concern themselves with these things — leaving them for others to enjoy. They dig and drudge in the darkness with eager expectancy. They are not seeking gold, but the book. Some grow feeble-minded with the toil, forget their object and their desire, and wander about in aimless idleness. The goblin has made them childish. They may be seen piling up little towers of sand, and reckoning how many grains are lacking before they tumble down. They make little waterfalls, and calculate precisely each bend and bay the flow will make. They dig little pits, and employ all their patience and genius in making them smooth and quite free from stones. If these poor, infatuated ones are disturbed in their labor, and asked

what they are doing, they look at you seriously and importantly, shake their heads and mutter: 'Wistik! Wistik!' Yes, it is all the fault of that wicked little goblin. Look out for him, Johannes!"

But Johannes was staring before him at the swaying, creaking trees. Above his clear child-eyes wrinkles had formed in the tender flesh. Never before had he looked so grave.

"But yet — you have said it yourself, that there was such a book! Oh, I know — certainly — that there is something in it which you will not tell me concerning the Great Light."

"Poor, poor Johannes!" said Windekind. And above the rushing and roaring of the storm his voice was like a peaceful choral-song borne from afar. "Love me — love me with your whole being. In me you will find more than you desire. You will realize what you cannot now imagine, and you will yourself be what you have longed to know. Earth and heaven will be your confidants — the stars your next of kin — infinity your dwelling-place. Love me — love me! Cling to me as the hop-vine clings to the tree — be true to me as the lake is to its bed. In me alone will you find repose, Johannes."

Windekind's words were ended, but it seemed as though the choral-song continued. Out of the remote distance it seemed to be floating on — solemn and regular — above the rushing and sighing of the wind — peaceful as the moonlight shining between the driving clouds.

Windekind stretched out his arms, and Johannes slept upon his bosom, protected by the little blue mantle.

Yet in the night he waked up. A stillness had suddenly and imperceptibly come over the earth, and the moon had sunk below the horizon. The wearied leaves hung motionless, and silent darkness filled the forest.

Then those questions came back to Johannes' head again — in swift, ghostly succession — driving out the very recent trustfulness. Why were human beings as they were? Why must he leave them — forego their love? Why must the winter

come? Why must the leaves fall, and the flowers die? Why? — Why?

There were the blue lights again — dancing in the depths of the underwood. They came and went. Johannes gazed after them expectantly. He saw the big, bright light shining on the dark tree-trunk. Windekind lay very still, and fast asleep.

“Just one question more,” thought Johannes, and he slipped out from under the blue mantle.

“Here you are again!” said Wistik, nodding in a friendly way. “That gives me a great deal of pleasure. Where is your friend?”

“Over yonder. I only wanted to ask you one more question. Will you answer it?”

“You have been among human beings, have you not? Is it my secret you have come for?”

“Who will find that book, Wistik?”

“Ah, yes. That’s it; that’s it! Will you help me if I tell you?”

“If I can, certainly.”

“Listen then, Johannes.” Wistik opened his eyes amazingly wide, and lifted his eyebrows higher than ever. Then he whispered along the back of his little hand:

“Human beings have the golden chest, fairies have the golden key. The foe of fairies finds it not; fairies’ friend only, opens it. A springtime night is the proper time, and Robin Redbreast knows the way.”

“Is that true, really true?” cried Johannes, as he thought of his little key.

“Yes,” said Wistik.

“Why, then, has no one yet found it?” asked Johannes. So many people are seeking it!”

“I have told no human being what I have confided to you, I have never yet found the fairies’ friend.”

“I have it, Wistik! I can help you!” cried Johannes, clapping his hands. “I will ask Windekind.”

Away he flew, over moss and dry leaves. Still, he stumbled now and then, and his step was heavy. Thick branches cracked under his feet where before not a grass-blade had bent.

There was the dense clump of ferns under which they had slept: how low it looked!

"Windekind!" he cried. But the sound of his own voice startled him.

"Windekind?" It sounded like a human voice! A frightened night-bird flew up with a scream.

There was no one under the ferns. Johannes could see nothing.

The blue lights had vanished. It was cold, and impenetrably dark all around him. Up above, he saw the black, spectral tree-tops against the starlight.

Once more he called. He dared not again. His voice seemed a profanation of the stillness, and Windekind's name a mocking sound.

Then poor little Johannes fell to the ground, and sobbed in contrite sorrow.

VII

THE morning was cold and grey. The black, glimmering boughs, all stripped by the storm, were weeping in the mist. Little Johannes ran hurriedly on over the wet, down-beaten grass — staring before him toward the edge of the woods where it was lighter, as if that were the end in view. His eyes were red from crying, and strained with fear and misery. He had been running back and forth the whole night, looking for the light. It had always been safe and home-like with Windekind. Now, in every dark spot lurked the ghost of forlornness, and he dared not look around.

At last, he left the woods and saw before him a meadow over which a fine, drizzling rain was falling. A horse stood in the middle of it near a leafless willow-tree, motionless and with drooping head, while the water dripped slowly from its shining sides, and out of its matted mane.

Johannes walked along by the woods. He looked with tired, anxious eyes toward the lonely horse and the grey, misty rain, and he whimpered softly.

"All is over now," he thought. "The sun will never come out again. After this it will always be with me as it is now — here."

But he dared not stand still in his despair; something more frightful yet would happen, he thought.

Then he saw the grand enclosure of a country-seat, and, under a linden tree with bright yellow foliage, a little cottage.

He went within the enclosure, and walked through broad avenues where the ground was thickly covered with layers of brown and yellow linden leaves. Purple asters grew along the grass-plots, and other brilliant autumn flowers were flaming there.

Then he came to a pond. Beside it stood a large house with low windows and glass doors. Rose-bushes and ivy

grew against the wall. It was all shut up, and wore a gloomy look. Chestnut-trees, half stripped of their foliage, stood all around; and, amid their fallen leaves, Johannes saw the shining brown chestnuts.

Then that chill, deathly feeling passed away. He thought of his own home. There, too, were chestnut-trees, and at this season he always went to find the glossy nuts. Suddenly he began to feel a longing — as though he had heard the call of a familiar voice. He sat down upon a bench near the house, and gave vent to his feelings in tears.

A peculiar odor caused him to look up. A man stood near him with a white apron on, and a pipe in his mouth. About his waist were strips of linden bark for binding up the flowers. Johannes knew this scent so well; it made him think of his own garden, and of the gardener, who brought him pretty caterpillars, and showed him starlings' eggs.

He was not alarmed, although it was a human being who stood beside him. He told the man that he had been deserted and was lost, and he gratefully followed him to the small dwelling under the yellow-leaved linden-tree.

Indoors sat the gardener's wife, knitting black stockings. Over the peat fire in the fireplace hung a big kettle of boiling water. On the mat by the fire lay a cat with folded forepaws — just as Simon sat when Johannes left home.

Johannes was given a seat by the fire that he might dry his feet. "Tick, tack! — Tick, tack!" said the big, hanging clock. Johannes looked at the steam which rose, hissing, from the kettle, and to the little tongues of flame that skipped nimbly and whimsically over the peat.

"Now I am among human beings," thought he.

It was not bad. He felt calm and contented. They were good and kind, and asked what he would like best to do.

"I would like best to stay here," he replied.

Here he was at peace, but if he went home, sorrow and tears would follow. He would be obliged to maintain silence, and they would tell him that he had been naughty. He would

have to see all the past over again, and think once more of everything.

He did long for his little room, for his father, for Presto — but he would rather endure the silent longing where he was, than the painful, racking return. It seemed as if here he might be thinking of Windekind, while at home he could not.

Windekind had surely gone away now — far away to the sunny land where the palms were bending over the blue seas. He would do penance here, and wait for him.

And so he implored the two good people to let him stay. He would be obedient and work for them. He would help care for the garden and the flowers, but only for this winter; — for he hoped in his heart that Windekind would return in the spring.

The gardener and his wife thought that Johannes had run away because he was not treated well at home. They sympathized with him, and promised to let him stay.

He remained, and helped them in the garden and among the flowers. He was given a little bedroom, with a blue wooden bedstead. From it, mornings, he could see the wet, yellow linden leaves slipping along the window-panes; and nights, the dark boughs rocking to and fro — with the stars playing hide-and-seek behind them. He gave names to the stars, and called the brightest Windekind.

He told his history to the flowers — almost all of which he had known at home; the big, serious asters, the gaudy zinnias, and the white chrysanthemums which continued to bloom so late in the rude autumn. When all the other flowers were dead the chrysanthemums still stood — and even after the first snowfall, when Johannes came one morning early to look at them, they lifted their cheerful faces and said: "Yes, we are still here. You didn't think we would be, *did* you?" They were very brave, but two days later they were all dead.

But the palms and tree-ferns still flourished in the greenhouse, and the strange flower-clusters of the orchids hung in their humid, sultry air. Johannes gazed with wonder into the

splendid cups, and thought of Windekind. On going out-of-doors, how cold and colorless everything looked — the black footsteps in the damp snow, and the rattling, dripping skeletons of trees!

Hour after hour, while the snowflakes were silently falling until the branches bowed beneath their weight of down, Johannes walked eagerly on in the violet dusk of the snow-shadowed woods. It was silence, but not death. And it was almost more beautiful than summer verdure; the interlocking of the pure white branches against the clear blue sky, or the descending clouds of glittering flakes when a heavily laden shrub let slide its snowy burden.

Once, on such a walk, when he had gone so far that nothing was to be seen save snow, and snow-covered branches — half white, half black — and all sound and life seemed smothered under its glistening covering, he thought he saw a tiny white animal run nimbly out in front of him. He followed it. It bore no likeness to any that he knew. Then he tried to grasp it, but it sped away and disappeared in a tree-trunk. Johannes peered into the round, black opening, and thought — “Could it be Wistik?”

He did not think much about him. It seemed mean to do so, and he did not wish to weaken in his doing of penance. And life with the two good people left him little to ask for. Evenings, he had to read aloud out of a thick book, in which much was said about God. But he knew that book, and read it absent-mindedly.

The night after his walk in the snow, however, he lay awake in bed, looking at the cold shining of the moonlight on the floor. Suddenly he saw two tiny hands close beside him — clinging fast to the bedside. Then the top of a little white fur cap appeared between the two hands, and at last he saw a pair of earnest eyes under high-lifted eyebrows.

“Good evening, Johannes,” said Wistik. “I came to remind you of our agreement. You cannot have found the book yet, for the spring has not come. But are you keeping

it in mind? What is the thick book I have seen you reading in? That cannot be the true book. Do not think that."

"I do *not* think so, Wistik," said Johannes. He turned over and tried to go to sleep again, but he could not get the little key out of his head.

And from this time on, as he read in the thick book, he kept thinking about it, and he saw clearly that it was not the true book.

VIII

"Now he will come," thought Johannes, the first time the snow had melted away, and here and there little clusters of snowdrops began to appear. "Will he not come now?" he asked the snowdrops. They could not tell, but remained with drooping heads looking at the earth as if they were ashamed of their haste, and wished to creep away again.

If they only could have done so! The numbing east winds soon began to blow again, and the poor, rash things were buried deep in the drifted snow.

Weeks later came the violets, their sweet perfume floating through the shrubbery. And when the sun had shone long and warmly on the mossy ground, the fair primulas opened out by hundreds and by thousands.

The shy violets, with their rich fragrance, were mysterious harbingers of coming magnificence, yet the cheerful primulas were gladness itself. The awakened earth had taken to herself the first sunbeams, and made of them a golden ornament.

"Now," thought Johannes, "now he is surely coming!" In suspense he watched the buds on the branches, as they swelled slowly day by day, and freed themselves from the bark, till the first pale-green points appeared among the brown scales. Johannes stayed a long time looking at those little green leaves, and never saw them stir. But even if he only just turned around they seemed to have grown bigger. "They do not dare while I am watching them," he thought.

The foliage had already begun to cast a shade, yet Windekind had not come. No dove had alighted near him — no little mouse had spoken to him. When he addressed the flowers they scarcely nodded, and made no reply whatever. "My penance is not over yet," he thought.

Then one sunny spring morning he passed the pond and

the house. The windows were all wide open. He wondered if any of the people had come yet.

The wild cherry that stood by the pond was entirely covered with tender leaves. Every twig was furnished with little, delicate-green wings. On the grass beside the bush sat a young girl. Johannes saw only her light-blue frock and her blonde hair. A robin was perched on her shoulder, and pecked out of her hand. Suddenly, she turned her head around and saw Johannes.

"Good day, little boy," said she, nodding in a friendly way.

Again Johannes thrilled from head to foot. Those were Windekind's eyes — that was Windekind's voice!

"Who are you?" he asked, his lips quivering with feeling.

"I am Robinetta, and this is my bird. He will not be afraid of you. Do you like birds?"

The redbreast was not afraid of Johannes. It flew to his arm. That was like old times. And it must be Windekind — that azure being!

"Tell me your name, Laddie," said Windekind's voice.

"Do you not know me? Do you not know that I am Johannes?"

"How could I know that?"

What did that mean? Still, it was the well-known, sweet voice. Those were the dark, heavenly-deep, blue eyes.

"Why do you look at me so, Johannes? Have you ever seen me before?"

"Yes, I do believe so."

"Surely, you must have dreamed it!"

"Dreamed?" thought Johannes. "Can I have dreamed everything? Can I be dreaming now?"

"Where were you born?" he asked.

"A long way from here, in a great city."

"Among human beings?"

Robinetta laughed. It was Windekind's laugh. "I believe so. Were not you?"

"Alas, yes! I was too!"

"Are you sorry for that? Do you not like human beings?"

"No. Who *could* like them?"

"Who? Well, Johannes; but you are an odd child! Do you like animals better?"

"Oh, much better — and flowers."

"Really, I do, too — sometimes. But that is not right. Father says we must love our friends."

"Why is that not right? I like whom I choose whether it is right or not."

"Fie, Johannes! Have you no parents, then, nor any one who cares for you? Are you not fond of them?"

"Yes," said Johannes, remembering. "I love my father, but not because it is right, nor because he is a human being."

"Why, then?"

"I do not know — because he is not like other human beings — because he, too, is fond of birds and flowers."

"And so am I, Johannes. Look!" And Robinetta called the robin to her hand, and petted it.

"I know it," said Johannes. "And I love you very much, too."

"Already? That is very soon," laughed the girl. "Whom do you love best of all?"

"I love —" Johannes hesitated. Should he speak Windekind's name? The fear that he might let slip that name to human ears was never out of his thoughts. And yet, was not this fair-haired being in blue, Windekind himself? Who else could give him that feeling of rest and happiness?

"You!" said he, all at once, looking frankly into the deep blue eyes. Courageously, he ventured a full surrender. He was anxious, though, and eagerly awaited the reception of his precious gift.

Again Robinetta laughed heartily, but she pressed his hand, and her look was no colder, her voice no less cordial.

"Well, Johannes," said she, "what have I done to earn this so suddenly?"

Johannes made no reply, but stood looking at her with growing confidence.

Robinetta stood up, and laid her arm about Johannes' shoulders. She was taller than he.

Thus they strolled through the woods, and picked great clusters of cowslips, until they could have hidden under the mountain of sun-filled yellow flowers. The little redbreast went with them — flying from branch to branch, and peering at them with its shining little black eyes.

They did not speak much, but now and then looked askance at each other. They were both perplexed by this adventure, and uncertain what they ought to think of each other.

Much to her regret, Robinetta had soon to turn back.

"I must go now, Johannes, but will you not take another walk with me? I think you are a nice little boy," said she in taking her leave.

"Tweet! Tweet!" said the robin as he flew after her.

When she had gone, and her image alone remained to him, he doubted no more who she was. She was the very same to whom he had given his friendship. The name Windekind rang fainter, and became confused with Robinetta.

Everything about him was again the same as it had formerly been. The flowers nodded cheerfully, and their perfume chased away the melancholy longing for home which, until now, he had felt and encouraged. Amid the tender greenery, in the soft, mild, vernal air, he felt all at once at home, like a bird that had found its nest. He stretched out his arms and took in a full, deep breath — he was so happy! On his way home, wherever he looked he always saw gliding before him the figure in light blue with the golden hair. It was as though he had been looking at the sun, until its image was stamped upon everything he saw.

From this day on Johannes went to the pond every clear morning. He went early — as soon as he was wakened by the squabbling of the sparrows in the ivy about his window, and by the tedious chirping and chattering of the starlings, as

they fluttered in the water-leader in the early sunshine. Then he hurried through the dewy grass, close to the house, and watched from behind the lilac-bush until he heard the glass door open, and saw the bright figure coming toward him.

Then they wandered through the woods, and over the hills which lay beyond. They talked about everything in sight; the trees, the plants, and the dunes. Johannes had a strange, giddy sensation as he walked beside her. Sometimes he felt light enough again to fly through the air. But he never could. He told the story of the flowers and of the animals, as Windekind had given it to him. But he forgot how he had learned it, and Windekind existed no more for him — only Robinetta. He was happy when she laughed with him, and he saw the friendship in her eyes; and he spoke to her as he had formerly done to his little dog — saying whatever came into his head, without hesitation or shyness. When he did not see her he spent the hours in thinking of her; and each thing he did was with the question whether Robinetta would find it good or beautiful.

And she, herself, appeared always so pleased to see him. She would smile and hasten her steps. She had told him that she would rather walk with him than with any one else.

"But, Johannes," she once asked, "how do you know all these things? How do you know what the May-bugs think, what the thrushes sing, and how it looks in a rabbit-hole, or on the bottom of the water?"

"They have told me," answered Johannes, "and I have myself been in a rabbit-hole and on the bottom of the water."

Robinetta knitted her delicate eyebrows and looked at him half mockingly. But his face was full of truth.

They were sitting under lilac trees, from which hung thick, purple clusters. Before them lay the pond with its reeds and duck-weed. They saw the black beetles gliding in circles over the surface, and little red spiders busily darting up and down. It swarmed with life and movement. Johannes, absorbed in remembrances, gazed into the depths, and said:

"I went down there once. I slipped down a reed to the very bottom. It is all covered with fallen leaves which make it so soft and smooth. It is always twilight there — a green twilight — for the light falls through the green duck-weed. And over my head I saw the long, white rootlets hanging down.

"The newts, which are very inquisitive, came swimming about me. It gives a strange feeling to have such great creatures swimming above one; and I could not see far in front, for it was dark there — yet green, too. And in that darkness the living things appeared like black shadows. There were paddle-footed water-beetles, and flat mussels, and sometimes, too, a little fish. I went a long way — hours away, I believe — and in the middle was a great forest of water-plants, where snails were creeping, and water-spiders were weaving their glistening nests. Minnows darted in and out, and sometimes they stayed with open mouths and quivering fins to look at me, they were so amazed. There I made the acquaintance of an eel whose tail I had the misfortune to step on. He told me about his travels. He had been as far as the sea, he said. Because of this, he had been made King of the Pond — for no one else had been so far. He always lay in the mud, sleeping, except when others brought him something to eat. He was a frightful eater. That was because he was a king. They prefer a fat king — one that is portly and dignified. Oh, it was splendid in that pond!"

"Then why can you not go there again — now?"

"Now?" asked Johannes, looking at her with great, pondering eyes. "Now? I can never go again. I should be drowned. But there is no need of it. I would rather be here by the lilacs, with you."

Robinetta shook her little blonde head wonderingly, and stroked Johannes' hair. Then she looked at her robin, which seemed to be finding all kinds of tid-bits at the margin of the pond. Just then it looked up, and kept watching the two with its bright little eyes.

"Do you understand anything about it, Birdling?"

The bird gave a knowing glance, and then went on with its hunting and pecking.

"Tell me something more, Johannes, of what you have seen."

Johannes gladly did so, and Robinetta listened attentively, believing all he said.

"But what is to prevent all that, *now*? Why can you not go again with me to all those places? I should love to go."

Johannes tried his best to remember, but a sunny haze obscured the dim distance over which he had passed. He could not exactly tell how he had lost his former happiness.

"I do not quite know — you must not ask about it. A silly little creature spoiled it all. But now it is all right again; still better than before."

The perfume of the lilacs settled gently down upon them; and the humming of the insects over the water, and the peaceful sunshine, filled them with a sweet drowsiness; until a shrill bell at the house began to ring, and Robinetta sped away.

That evening, when Johannes was in his little room, looking at the moon-shadows cast by the ivy leaves which covered the window-panes — there seemed to be a tapping on the glass. Johannes thought it was an ivy leaf fluttering in the night wind. Yet it tapped so plainly — always three taps at a time — that Johannes very gently opened the window and cautiously looked about. The ivy against the house gleamed in the blue light. Below, lay a dim world full of mystery. There were caverns and openings into which the moonlight cast little blue flecks — making the darkness still deeper.

After Johannes had been gazing a long time into this wonderful world of shadows, he saw the form of a mannikin close by the window, half hidden by a large ivy leaf. He recognized Wistik instantly, by his great, wonder-struck eyes under the uplifted brows. A tiny moonbeam just touched the tip of Wistik's long nose.

"Have you forgotten me, Johannes? Why are you not

thinking about it now? It is the right time. Did you ask Robin Redbreast the way?"

"Ah, Wistik, why should I ask? I have everything I could wish for. I have Robinetta."

"But that will not last long. And you can be still happier — Robinetta, too. Must the little key stay where it is, then? Only think how grand it would be if you both should find the book! Ask Robin Redbreast about it. I will help you whenever I can."

"At least, I can ask about it," said Johannes.

Wistik nodded, and scrambled nimbly down the vines.

Before he went to bed, Johannes stayed a long time — looking at the dark shadows and the shining ivy leaves.

The next day he asked the redbreast if he knew the way to the golden chest. Robinetta listened, in astonishment. Johannes saw the robin nod, and peep askance at Robinetta.

"Not here, not here!" chirped the little bird.

"What do you mean, Johannes?" asked Robinetta.

"Do you not know about it, Robinetta, and where to find it? Are you not waiting for the little gold key?"

"No! no! Tell me — what is that?"

Johannes told her what he knew about the book.

"And I have the little key. I thought you had the golden chest. Is it not so, Birdie?"

But the bird feigned not to hear, and fluttered about among the fresh, bright beech leaves.

They were resting against a slope on which small beech and spruce trees were growing. A narrow green path ran slantingly by, and they sat at the border of it, on thick, dark-green moss. They could look over the tops of the lowest saplings upon a sea of green foliage billowing in sun and shade.

"I do believe, Johannes," said Robinetta, after a little, "that I can find what you are looking for. But what do you mean about the little key? How did you come by it?"

"Why! How did I? How was it?" murmured Johannes, gazing far away over the green expanse.

Suddenly, as though fledged in the sunny sky, two white butterflies met his sight. They whirled about with uncertain capricious flight — fluttering and twinkling in the sunlight. Yet they came closer.

“Windekind! Windekind!” whispered Johannes, suddenly remembering.

“Who is that? Who is Windekind?” asked Robinetta.

The redbreast flew up, chattering, and the daisies in the grass before him seemed suddenly to be staring at Johannes in great alarm with their white, wide-open eyes.

“Did he give you the little key?” continued the girl. Johannes nodded, in silence; but she wanted to know more.

“Who was it? Did he teach you all those things? Where is he?”

“He is not any more. It is Robinetta now — no one but Robinetta. Robinetta alone!” He clasped her arm, and pressed his little head against it.

“Silly boy!” she said, laughing. “I will find the book for you — I know where it is.”

“But then I must go and get the key, and it is far away.”

“No, no, you need not. I will find it without a key — to-morrow — I promise you.”

On their way home, the little butterflies flitted back and forth in front of them.

Johannes dreamed of his father that night — of Robinetta, and of many others. They were all good friends, and they stood near looking at him cordially, and trustfully. Yet later, their faces changed. They grew cold and ironical. He looked anxiously around; on all sides were fierce, hostile faces. He felt a nameless distress, and waked up weeping.

IX

JOHANNES had already sat a long while, waiting. The air was chilly, and great clouds were drifting close above the earth in endless, majestic succession. They spread out sombre, wide-waving mantles, and reared their haughty heads toward the clear light that shone above them. Sunlight and shadow chased each other swiftly over the trees, like flickering flames. Johannes was in an anxious state of mind, thinking about the book; not believing that he should really find it that day. Between the clouds — much higher — awfully high, he saw an expanse of clear blue sky; and upon it, stretched out in motionless calm, were delicate, white, plume-like clouds.

"It ought be like that," he thought. "So high, so bright, so still!"

Then came Robinetta. The robin was not with her.

"It is all right, Johannes," she cried out. "You may come and see the book."

"Where is Robin Redbreast?" said Johannes, mistrustfully.

"He did not come. But we are not going for a walk."

Then he went with her, thinking all the time to himself:

"It cannot be! Not *this* way! — it must be entirely different!"

Yet he followed the sunny, blonde hair that lighted his way.

Alas! things went sadly now with little Johannes. I could wish that his story ended here. Did you ever have a splendid dream of a magical garden where the flowers and animals all loved you and talked to you? And did the idea come to you then, that you might wake up soon, and all that happiness be lost? Then you vainly try to hold the dream — and not to wake to the cold light of day. That was the way Johannes felt when he went with Robinetta.

He went into the house — and down a passage that echoed

with his footsteps. He breathed the air of clothes and food; he thought of the long days when he had had to stay indoors, of his school-tasks, and of all that had been sombre and cold in his life.

He entered a room with people in it — how many he did not see. They were talking together, yet when he came they ceased to speak. He noticed the carpet; it had big, impossible flowers in glaring colors. They were as strange and deformed as those of the hangings in his bedroom at home.

"Well, is this the gardener's little boy?" said a voice right in front of him. "Come here, my young friend; you need not be afraid."

And another voice sounded suddenly, close beside him: "Well, Robbi, a pretty little playmate you have there!"

What did all this mean? The deep wrinkles came again above the child's dark eyes, and Johannes looked around in perplexity.

A man in black clothes sat near — looking at him with cold, grey eyes.

"And so you wish to make acquaintance with the Book of Books! It amazes me that your father, whom I know to be a devout man, has not already given it to you."

"You do not know my father — he is far away."

"Is that so? Well, it is all the same. Look here, my young friend! Read a great deal in this. Upon your path in life it will . . ."

But Johannes had already recognized the book. It could not possibly come to him in *this* way! No! he could not have it so. He shook his head.

"No, no! This is not what I mean. This I know. This is not it."

He heard sounds of surprise, and felt the looks which were fastened on him from all sides.

"What! What do you mean, child?"

"I know this book; it is the Book of Human Beings. But there is not enough in it; if there were there would be rest

among men—and peace. And there is none. I mean something else about which no one can doubt who sees it — wherein is told why everything is as it is — precisely and plainly.”

“How is that possible? Where did the boy get that notion?”

“Who taught you that, my young friend?”

“I believe you have been reading depraved books, boy, and are repeating the words!”

Thus rang the various voices. Johannes felt his cheeks burning, and he began to feel dizzy. The room spun round, and the huge flowers on the carpet floated up and down. Where was the little mouse which had warned him so faithfully that day at school? He needed him now.

“I am not repeating it out of books, and he who taught me is worth more than all of you together. I know the language of flowers, and of animals — I am their intimate friend. I know, too, what human beings are, and how they live. I know all the secrets of fairies and of goblins, for they love me more than human beings do.”

Oh, Mousiel! Mousiel!

Johannes heard coughing and laughing, around and behind him. It all rang and rasped in his ears.

“He seems to have been reading Andersen.”

“He is not quite right in his head.”

The man in front of him said:

“If you know Andersen, little man, you ought to have more respect for God and His Word.” “God!” He knew that word, and he thought about Windekind’s lesson.

“I have no respect for God. God is a big oil-lamp, which draws thousands to wreck and ruin.”

No laughing now, but a serious silence in which the horror and consternation were palpable. Johannes felt even in his back the piercing looks. It was like his dream of the night before.

The man in black stood up and took him by the arm. That hurt, and almost broke his heart.

"Listen, boy! I do not know whether you are foolish or deeply depraved, but I will not suffer such godlessness here. Go away and never come into my sight again, wretched boy! I shall ask about you, but never again set foot in this house. Do you understand?"

Everybody looked at him coldly and unkindly — as in his dream the night before. Johannes looked around him in distress.

"Robinetta! Where is Robinetta?"

"Well, indeed! Corrupt my child? If you ever speak to her again, look out!"

"No, let me go to her! I will not leave her. Robinetta!" cried Johannes.

But she sat in a corner, frightened, and did not look up.

"Out, you rascal! Do you hear? Take care, if you have the boldness to come back again."

The painful grip led him through the sounding corridor — the glass door rattled, and Johannes stood outside, under the dark, lowering clouds.

He did not cry now, but gazed quietly out in front of him as he slowly walked on. The sorrowful wrinkles were deeper above his eyes, and they stayed there.

The little redbreast sat in a linden hedge and peered at him. He stood still and silently returned the look. But there was no trust now in the timid, peeping little eyes; and when he took a step nearer, the quick little creature whirled away from him.

"Away, away! A human being!" chirped the sparrows, sitting together in the garden path. And they darted away in all directions.

The open flowers did not smile, but looked serious and indifferent; as they do with every stranger.

Johannes did not heed these signs, but was thinking of what the cruel men had done to him. He felt as if his inmost being had been violated by a hard, cold touch. "They *shall* believe

me!" thought he. "I will get my little key and show it to them."

"Johannes! Johannes!" called a light, little voice. There was a bird's nest in a holly tree, and Wistik's big eyes peeped over the brim of it. "Where are you bound for?"

"It is all your fault, Wistik," said Johannes. "Let me alone."

"How did you come to talk about it to human beings? They do not understand. Why do you tell them these things? It is very stupid of you."

"They laughed at me, and hurt me. They are miserable creatures. I hate them!"

"No, Johannes, you love them."

"No! No!"

"If you did not, you would not mind it so much that they are not like yourself; and it would not matter what they said. You must concern yourself less about human beings."

"I want my key. I want to show it to them."

"You must not do that; they would not believe you even if you did. What would be the use of it?"

"I want my little key — under the rose-bush. Do you know how to find it?"

"Yes, indeed! Near the pond, is it not? Yes, I know."

"Then take me to it, Wistik."

Wistik climbed up to Johannes' shoulder, and pointed out the way. They walked the whole day long. The wind blew, and now and then showers fell; but at evening the clouds ceased driving, and lengthened themselves out into long bands of gray and gold.

When they came to Johannes' own dunes, he felt deeply moved, and he whispered again and again: "Windekind! Windekind!"

There was the rabbit-hole, and the slope against which he had once slept. The grey reindeer-moss was tender and moist, and did not crackle beneath his feet. The roses were withered, and the yellow primroses with their faint,

languid fragrance held up their cups by hundreds. Higher still rose the tall, proud torch-plants, with their thick, velvety leaves.

Johannes tried to trace the delicate, brownish leaves of the wild-rose.

"Where is it, Wistik? I do not see it."

"I know nothing about it," said Wistik. "You hid the key — I didn't."

The field where the rose had blossomed was full of primroses, staring vacantly. Johannes questioned them, and also the torch-plants. They were much too proud, however, for their tall flower-clusters reached far up above him; so he asked the small, tri-colored violets on the sandy ground.

But no one knew anything of the wild-rose. They all were newly-come flowers — even the arrogant torch-plant, tall though it was.

"Oh! where is it? Where is it?"

"Have you, too, served me a trick?" cried Wistik. "I expected it — that is always the way with human beings!"

He slipped down from Johannes' shoulder, and ran away into the tall grass.

Johannes looked hopelessly around. There stood a small rose-bush.

"Where is the big rose?" asked Johannes, "the big one that used to stand here?"

"We do not speak to human beings," said the little bush.

That was the last sound he heard. Every living thing kept silence. Only, the reeds rustled in the soft, evening wind.

"Am I a human being?" thought Johannes. "No, that cannot — cannot be. I will not be a human being. I hate human beings."

He was tired and faint-hearted, and went to the border of the little field to lie down upon the soft, grey moss with its humid, heavy fragrance.

"I cannot turn back now, nor ever see Robinetta again.

Shall I not die without her? Shall I keep on living, and be a man — a man like those who laughed at me?"

Then, all at once, he saw again the two white butterflies that flew up to him from the way of the setting sun. In suspense, he followed their flight. Would they show him the way? They hovered above his head — then floated apart to return again — whirling about in fickle play. Little by little they left the sun, and finally fluttered beyond the border of the dunes — away to the woods. There, only the highest tips were still touched by the evening glow that shone out red and vivid from under the long files of sombre clouds.

Johannes followed the butterflies. But when they had flown above the nearest trees, he saw a dark shadow swoop toward them in noiseless flight, and then hover over them. It pursued and overtook them. The next moment they had vanished. The black shadow darted swiftly up to him, and he covered his face with his hands, in terror.

"Well, little friend, why do you sit here, crying?" rang a sharp, taunting voice close beside him.

Johannes had seen a huge bat coming toward him, but when he looked up, a swarthy mannikin, not much taller than himself, was standing on the dunes. It had a great head, with big ears, that stood out — dark — against the bright evening sky, and a lean little body with slim legs. Of his face Johannes could see only the small, glittering eyes.

"Have you lost anything, little fellow? If so, I will help you seek it," said he. But Johannes silently shook his head.

"Look! Would you like these?" he began again, opening his hand. Johannes saw there something white, that from time to time barely stirred. It was the two white butterflies — dead — with the torn and broken little wings still quivering. Johannes shivered, as though some one had blown on the back of his neck, and he looked up in alarm at the strange being.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Would you like to know my name, Chappie? Well, just

call me Pluizer* — simply Pluizer. I have still prettier names, but that you do not yet understand."

"Are you a human being?"

"Better yet! Still, I have arms and legs and a head — just see what a head! And yet the boy asks if I'm a human being! Well, Johannes, Johannes!" And the mannikin laughed with a shrill, piercing sound.

"How do you know who I am?" asked Johannes.

"Oh, that is a trifle for me! I know a great deal more. I know where you came from, and what you came here to do. I know an astonishing lot — almost everything."

"Ah! Mr. Pluizer . . ."

"Pluizer — Pluizer. No ceremony!"

"Do you know then? . . ." But Johannes suddenly stopped. "He is a human being," thought he.

"About your little key, do you mean?" asked the mannikin. "Yes, indeed I do."

"But I did not think human beings could know anything about that."

"Silly boy! And Wistik has babbled to so many about it!"

"Do you know Wistik, too?"

"Oh, yes — one of my best friends, and I have a great many of them. But I know about the little key, without the help of Wistik. I know a great deal more than Wistik. Wistik is a good enough fellow, but stupid — uncommonly stupid. Not I — far from it!" And Pluizer tapped his big head with his lean little hand in a very pert way.

"Do you know, Johannes," he continued, "a great defect in Wistik? But you never must tell him, for he would be very angry."

"Well, what is it?" asked Johannes.

"He does not exist. That is a great shortcoming, but he will not admit it. And he says of me that I do not exist — but that is a lie. I not exist? The *mischief* — I do!"

And Pluizer, thrusting the little butterflies into his pocket, suddenly threw himself over, and stood on his head in front of

* See note, page 520.

Johannes. Then he made a very ugly grimace, and stuck out his long tongue. Johannes, who did not yet feel quite at his ease alone with this remarkable creature, at the close of the day, in the lonely dunes, was quaking now, with fear.

"This is a most charming way of seeing the world," said Pluizer, still standing on his head. "If you like, I will teach you to do it. Everything looks much clearer and more life-like."

And he sprawled his spindle legs out in the air, and whirled around on his hands. As the red afterglow fell upon his inverted face, Johannes thought it frightful; the small eyes blinked in the light, and showed the whites on the wrong side.

"You see, this way the clouds look like the floor, and the ground the cover, of the world. You can maintain that as well as the contrary. There is no above nor below, however. Those clouds would make a fine promenade."

Johannes looked at the long clouds. He thought they appeared like a plowed field, with blood welling up from the red furrows. And over the sea the splendor was streaming from the gates of that grotto in the clouds.

"Could one get there, and go in?" he asked.

"Nonsense!" said Pluizer, landing suddenly on his feet again, to the great relief of Johannes. "Nonsense! If you were there, it would be precisely as it is here — and the beauty of it would then appear still a little farther off. In those beautiful clouds there, it is misty, grizzly, and cold."

"I do not believe you," said Johannes. "Now I can very well see that you are a human being."

"Oh, come! Not believe me, dear boy, because I am a human being! And what particular thing do you take yourself for?"

"Oh, Pluizer! Am I too a human being?"

"What did you suppose? An elf? Elves do not fall in love." And Pluizer suddenly dropped down exactly in front of Johannes — his legs crossed under him — grinning straight

into his face. Johannes felt indescribably distressed and perplexed under this scrutiny, and would have liked to hide, or make himself invisible. Still he could not even turn his eyes away.

"Only human beings fall in love, Johannes. Do you hear? And that is good; otherwise before long there would be no more of them. And you are in love as well as the best of them, although you are still so young. Who are you thinking about, this instant?"

"Robinetta!" whispered Johannes, barely loud enough to be heard.

"Whom do you long for most?"

"Robinetta!"

"Who is the one without whom you think you cannot live?"

Johannes' lips moved silently: "Robinetta!"

"Now, then, you silly fellow," sneered Pluizer, "how can you fancy yourself to be an elf? Elves do not fall in love with the children of men."

"But it was Windekind," stammered Johannes, in his embarrassment. At that, Pluizer looked terribly angry, and he seized Johannes by the ears with his bony little hands.

"What stuff is this? Would you frighten me with that dunce? He is sillier than Wistik — far more silly. He does not know it, though. And what is more, he does not exist at all, and never has existed. I alone exist, do you understand? If you do not believe me, I will make you feel that I *do* exist."

And he shook poor Johannes by the ears — hard. The latter cried out: "But I have known him so long, and I have traveled so far with him!"

"You have dreamed it, I say. Where, then, are the rose-bush and the little key? Hey! — But you are not dreaming now! Do you feel that?"

"Auch!" cried Johannes; for Pluizer was tweaking his ears.

It had grown dark, and the bats were flying with shrill squeakings close to their heads. The air was black and heavy — not a leaf stirred in the woods.

"May I go home?" begged Johannes. "To my father?"

"Your father? What do you want of him?" asked Pluizer.

"That person would give you a warm reception after your long absence!"

"I want to go home," said Johannes; and he thought of the living-room with the bright lamp-light, where he had so often sat beside his father, listening to the scratching of his pen. It was cozy there, and peaceful.

"Yes, but you ought not to have gone away, and *stayed* away — all for the sake of that madcap who has no existence. It is too late now. And if nothing turns up to prevent it, I will take care of you. Whether I do it, or your father does it, is precisely the same thing. Such a father! That is only imagination, however. Did you make your own selection? Do you think no one else so good — so clever? I am just as good, and much more clever."

Johannes had no heart for an answer; he closed his eyes, and nodded slightly.

"And," continued the mannikin, "you must not look for anything further from that Robinetta."

He laid his hands upon Johannes' shoulders, and chattered close to his ear. "That child thought you just as much a fool as the others did. Did you not see that she stayed in the corner, and said not a word when they all laughed at you? She is no better than the others. She thought you a nice little boy, and she played with you — just as she would have played with a May-bug. She cannot have cared about your going away. And she knows nothing about that book. But I do — I know where it is, and I will help you find it. I know nearly everything."

And Johannes began to believe him.

"Are you going with me? Will you search for it with me?"

"I am so tired," said Johannes. "Let me go to sleep somewhere."

"I care nothing for sleep," said Pluizer. "I am too lively for that. A person ought always to be looking and thinking."

But I will leave you in peace for a little while — till morning comes."

Then he put on the friendliest face he could. Johannes looked straight into the glittering little eyes until he could see nothing else. His head grew heavy — he leaned against the mossy slope. The little eyes seemed to get farther and farther away until they were shining stars in the darkening sky. He thought he heard the sound of distant voices, as if the earth were moving away from him — and then he ceased to think at all.

X

EVEN before he was fully awake he had a vague idea that something unusual had occurred while he slept. Still, he was not curious to know what it was, nor to look about him. He would he were lapped again in the dream which, like a reluctant mist, was slowly drifting away. Robinetta had come to him again in the dream, and stroked his hair in the old way; and he had seen his father once more, and Presto, in the garden with the pond.

"Auch! That hurt. Who did that?" Johannes opened his eyes, and saw, in the grey dawn, close beside him, a small being who had been pulling his hair. He was lying in a bed, and the light was dim and wavering — as in a room.

But the face that bent over him brought back, at once, all the misery and gloom of the day before. It was Pluizer's face — less like a hobgoblin, and more human — but just as ugly and frightful as ever.

"Oh, let me dream!" he murmured.

But Pluizer shook him. "Are you mad, you lazy boy? Dreams are foolish, and keep one from getting on. A human being must work and think and seek. That is what you are human for."

"I do not want to be a human being. I want to dream."

"Whether you wish to or not — you must. You are in my charge now, and you are going to act, and seek, in my company. With me alone can you find what you desire, and I shall not leave you until we have found it."

Johannes felt a vague terror. Yet a superior power seemed to press and coerce him. Unresistingly, he resigned himself.

Gone were fields and flowers and trees. He was in a small, dimly-lighted room. Outside, as far as he could see, were houses and houses — dark and dingy — in long, monotonous rows.

Smoke in thick folds was rising everywhere, and it swept, like a murky fog, through the streets below. And along those streets the people hurried in confusion, like great black busy ants. A dull, confused, continuous roar ascended from this throng.

"Look, Johannes!" said Pluizer. "Now is not that a pretty sight? Those are human beings, and all those houses, as far as you can see — still farther than that belfry in the blue distance — are full of people, from top to bottom. Is not that remarkable? That is rather different from an ant-hill!"

Johannes listened with shrinking curiosity, as if some huge, horrible monster were being shown him. He seemed to be standing on the back of that monster, and to see the black blood streaming through the swollen arteries, and the dark breath ascending from a hundred nostrils. And the ominous growling of that awful voice filled him with fears.

"Look! How fast these people go, Johannes!" continued Pluizer. "You can see, can you not, that they are all in a hurry, and hunting for something? But it is droll that no one knows precisely what it is. After they have been seeking a little while, they come face to face with some one. His name is Hein."

"Who is that?" asked Johannes.

"Oh, a good friend of mine. I will introduce you to him, without fail. Now this Hein asks: 'Are you looking for me?' At that, most of them usually say: 'Oh, no! Not you.' Then Hein remarks: 'But there is nothing to be found save me.' So they have to content themselves with Hein."

Johannes perceived that he spoke of death.

"Is that always the way — always?"

"To be sure it is — always. But yet, day after day, a new crowd gathers, and they begin their search not knowing for what — seeking, seeking, until at last they find Hein. So it has been for a pretty long while, and so it will continue to be."

"Shall I, too, find nothing else, Pluizer? Nothing but . . ."

"Yes, Hein you will surely find, some day. But that does not matter. Only seek — always be seeking."

"But the little book, Pluizer? You might let me find the book."

"Well, who knows! I have not forbidden it. We must seek — seek. We know, at least, what we are looking for. Wistik taught us that. Others there are who try all their lives to find out what they are really seeking. They are the philosophers, Johannes. But when Hein comes, it is all up with their search as well."

"That is frightful, Pluizer!"

"Oh, no! Indeed it is not. Hein is very good-hearted, but he is misunderstood."

Some one toiled up the stairs outside the chamber door — Clump! clump! on the wooden stairs.

Clump! clump! Nearer and nearer. Then some one rapped at the door, and it sounded like ice tapping on wood.

A tall man entered. He had deep-set eyes, and long, lean hands. A cold draft swept through the little room.

"Well, well!" said Pluizer. "We were just speaking of you. Take a seat. How goes it with you?"

"Busy, busy!" said the tall man, wiping the cold moisture from his white, bony forehead.

Stiff with fright, Johannes gazed into the deep-set eyes which were fixed upon him. They were very deep and dark, but not cruel — not threatening. After a few moments he breathed more freely, and his heart beat less rapidly.

"This is Johannes," said Pluizer. "He has heard of a certain book which tells why everything is as it is; and we are going together to find that book, are we not?" Then Pluizer laughed, significantly.

"Is that so? Well, that is good," said Death kindly, nodding to Johannes.

"He is afraid he will not find it, but I tell him to seek first, diligently."

"Certainly," said Death. "It is best to seek diligently."

"He thought that you were so horrible! You see, do you not, Johannes, that you made a mistake?"

"Ah, yes," said Death, most kindly. "They speak very ill of me. My outward appearance is not prepossessing, but I mean well."

He smiled faintly, like one whose mind was full of more serious matters than those of which he spoke. Then he turned his sombre eyes away from Johannes, and they wandered pensively toward the great town.

It was a long time before Johannes ventured to speak. At last, he said softly:

"Are you going to take me with you, *now*?"

"What do you mean, my child?" said Death, roused from his meditations. "No, not now. You must grow up and become a good man."

"I will not be a man — like the others."

"Come, come!" said Death. "There is no help for it."

It was clear that this was an every-day phrase with him. He continued:

"My friend, Pluizer, can teach you how to become a good man. It can be learned in various ways, but Pluizer teaches it excellently. It is something very fine and admirable to be a good man. You must not scorn it, my little lad."

"Seeking, thinking, looking!" said Pluizer.

"To be sure! To be sure!" said Death; and then, to Pluizer, "To whom are you going to take him?"

"To Doctor Cijfer, my old pupil."

"Ah, yes. He is a good pupil. He is a very fine example of a man — almost perfect in his way."

"Shall I see Robinetta again?" asked Johannes, trembling.

"What does the boy mean?" asked Death.

"Oh, he was love-struck, and yet fancied himself to be an elf! He, he, he!" laughed Pluizer, maliciously.

"No, my dear child, that will never do," said Death. "You will forget such things with Doctor Cijfer. He who seeks what you are seeking must forget all other things. All or nothing."

"I shall make a doughty man of him. I shall just let him see what love really is, and then he will have nothing at all to do with it."

And Pluizer laughed gaily. Death again fixed his black eyes upon poor Johannes, who found it hard to keep from sobbing; for he felt ashamed in the presence of Death.

Suddenly Death stood up, "I must away," said he. "I am wasting my time. There is much to be done. Good-by, Johannes. We are sure to see each other again. You must not be afraid of me."

"I am not afraid of you — I wish you would take me with you. Oh, take me!" But Death gently motioned him back. He was used to such appeals.

"No, Johannes. Go now to your task. Seek and see! Ask me no more. Some day I will ask, and that will be soon enough."

When he had disappeared, Pluizer behaved in a very extraordinary manner. He sprang over chairs, tumbled about the floor, climbed up the wardrobe and the mantelpiece, and performed neck-breaking tricks in the open windows.

"Well, that was Hein — my good friend Hein!" said he. "Do you not think him nice? A bit plain and morose in appearance; but he can be quite cheerful when he finds pleasure in his work. Sometimes, however, it bores him; for it is rather monotonous."

"Who tells him, Pluizer, where he is to go?"

Pluizer leered at Johannes in a teasing, cunning way.

"Why do you ask that? He goes his own gait — he takes whom he can catch."

Later, Johannes saw that it was otherwise. But he could not yet know whether or not Pluizer always spoke the truth.

They went out to the street, and moved with the swarming throng. The grimy men passed on, pell-mell — laughing and chatting so gaily that Johannes could not help wondering. He noticed that Pluizer nodded to many of them; but no one

returned the greeting — all were looking straight forward as if they had seen nothing.

"They are going like fun now," said Pluizer, "as though not a single one of them knew me. But that is only a pretext. They cannot cut me when I am alone with them; and then they are not so jolly." Johannes became conscious that some one was following them. On looking round, he saw the tall, pale figure moving among the people with great, inaudible strides. Hein nodded to Johannes.

"Do the people also see him?" asked Johannes of Pluizer.

"Yes, certainly! all of them; but they do not wish to know him. Well, for the present I overlook this defiance."

The din and stir brought to Johannes a kind of stupor in which he forgot his troubles. The narrow streets and the high houses dividing the blue sky into straight strips — the people passing to and fro beside him — the shuffling of footsteps, and the rattling of wagons, effaced the old visions and the dream of that former night, as a storm disturbs the reflections in mirror-like water. It seemed to him that nothing else existed save walls and windows and people; as if he too must do the same, and run and rush in the restless, breathless tumult.

Then they came to a quiet neighborhood, where stood a large house with grey, gloomy windows. It looked severe and uninviting. It was very quiet within, and there came to Johannes a mingling of strange, pungent odors — a damp, cellar-like smell being the most perceptible. In a room, full of odd-looking instruments, sat a solitary man. He was surrounded with books, and glass and copper articles — all of them unfamiliar to Johannes. A stray sunbeam entered the room, passed on over his head, and sparkled on the flasks filled with pretty, tinted particles. The man was looking intently through a copper tube, and did not look up.

As Johannes came nearer, he heard him murmur, "Wistik! Wistik!"

Beside the man, on a long, black bench, lay something

white and downy. What it was Johannes could not clearly see.

"Good morning, doctor!" said Pluizer. But still the doctor did not look up.

Then Johannes was terrified, for the white object at which he was looking so intently, began all at once to struggle convulsively. What he had seen was the downy, white breast of a little rabbit. Its head, with the twitching nostrils, was held backward by pinching clamps of iron, and the four little feet were tightly bound along its body. The hopeless effort to free himself was soon over, and the little creature lay still again; the only sign of life being the rapid movement of the blood-stained throat.

Johannes looked at the round, gentle eyes — so wide open with helpless anguish, and it seemed to him that he recognized them. Was not this the soft little body against which he had rested that first, blissful, elf-land night? Old remembrances came thronging over him. He flew to the little creature.

"Wait, wait! Poor Bunnie, I will help you!" And he hurried to untie the cords which were cutting into the tender little feet.

But his hands were seized in a tight grip, and a shrill laugh rang in his ears.

"What does this mean, Johannes? Are you still so childish? What must the doctor think of you?"

"What does the boy want? Why is he here?" asked the doctor, amazed.

"He wants to be a man, and so I brought him to you; but he is still rather young and childish. This is not the way to find what you are seeking, Johannes!"

"No, this is not the way," said the doctor.

"Doctor, let that rabbit loose!"

But Pluizer clutched both his hands, and squeezed them painfully.

"What was our agreement, Jackanapes?" he hissed in his ear. "We were to seek, were we not? We are not in the

dunes here, with Windekind, and with stupid animals. We should be men — men, do you understand? If you wish to remain a child — if you are not strong enough to help me — I will send you out of the way. Then you may seek — all by yourself!”

Johannes believed him and said no more. He determined to be strong. So he shut his eyes, that he might not see the rabbit.

“Good boy!” said the doctor. “You appear somewhat tender-hearted for making a beginning. It truly is rather a sad sight the first time. I never behold it willingly myself, and avoid it as much as possible. Yet it is indispensable; and you must understand that we are men, and not animals — that the welfare of mankind and of science is of more importance than the life of a few rabbits.”

“Hear!” said Pluizer. “Science and mankind.”

“The man of science,” continued the doctor, “stands higher than all other men, and so he should overcome the little tender-nesses which the normal man feels, for that great interest — Science. Would you like to be such a man? Was that your vocation, my boy?”

Johannes hesitated. He did not exactly know what a vocation was — no more than did the May-bug.

Said he, “I want to find the book that Wistik spoke of.”

The doctor looked surprised and asked, “Wistik?”

Pluizer said quickly, “Indeed he wants to be such a man, Doctor! I know he does. He seeks the highest wisdom. He wishes to grasp the very essence of things.”

Johannes nodded a “Yes!” So far as he understood, that was his aim.

“You must be strong, then, Johannes — not weak and softhearted. Then I will help you. But remember; all or nothing.”

And with trembling fingers Johannes helped to retie the loosened cords around the little feet of the rabbit.

XI

"Now, we shall see," said Pluizer, "if I cannot show you just as fine sights as Windekind can."

And when they had bidden the doctor good-by — promising to return soon, he guided Johannes into every nook and corner of the great town. He showed him how the great monster lived, breathed, and fed itself; how it consumed, and again renewed itself.

But he was partial to the slums and alleys, where the people were packed together — where everything was gloomy and grimy, and the air black and close.

He took him into one of the large buildings from which Johannes had seen the smoke ascending that first day.

A deafening roar pervaded the place — everywhere a rattling, clanking, pounding, and resounding. Great wheels revolved, and long belts whizzed in rapid undulations. The walls and floors were black, the windows broken or covered with dust. The mighty chimneys rose high above the blackened building, belching great columns of curling smoke. In that turmoil of wheels and machinery Johannes saw numbers of pale-faced men with blackened hands and clothing, silently and ceaselessly working.

"Who are they?" asked Johannes.

"Wheels — more wheels," laughed Pluizer, "or human beings — as you choose. What they are doing there they do, day in — day out. And one can be human in that way, also — after a fashion."

They went on into dirty, narrow streets, where the little strip of blue sky looked only a finger's width; and even then was clouded by the clothes hung out to dry. It swarmed with people there. They jostled one another, shouted, laughed, and sometimes sang. In the houses the rooms were so small, so dark and damp, that Johannes hardly dared to breathe.

He saw ragged children creeping over the bare floors; and young girls, with disheveled hair, humming melodies to thin, pale nurslings. He heard quarreling and scolding, and all the faces around him were tired, dull, or indifferent.

Johannes' heart was wrung with pain. It was not akin to his earlier grief — he was ashamed of that.

"Pluizer," he asked, "have these people always lived here — so dreary and so wretched? While I . . ." He dared not go on.

"Certainly; and that is fortunate. Indeed, their life is not so very dreary and wretched. They are inured to this, and know nothing better. They are dull, careless cattle. Do you see those two women there — sitting in front of their door? They look as contentedly over the foul street as you used to look upon your dunes. There is no need for you to cry over these people. You might as well cry about the moles that never see the daylight."

Johannes did not know what to reply, nor did he know why he felt so sad.

In the midst of the clamorous pushing and rushing he still saw the pale, hollow-eyed man, striding with noiseless steps.

"He is a good man after all. Do you not think so?" said Pluizer, "to take the people away from this? But even here they are afraid of him."

When night fell, and hundreds of lamps flickered in the wind — casting long, wavering lights over the black water, they passed through the silent streets. The tall old houses looked tired — as if leaning against one another in sleep. Most of them had closed their eyes; but here and there a window still sent out a faint, yellow glimmer.

Pluizer told Johannes long stories about those who dwelt behind them — of the pains that were there endured, and of the struggles that took place there between misery and love of life. He did not spare him, but selected the gloomiest, the lowest, and most trying; and grinned with enjoyment when Johannes grew pale and silent at his shocking tales.

"Pluizer," asked Johannes, suddenly, "do you know anything about the Great Light?"

He thought that that question might save him from the darkness which was pressing closer and heavier upon him.

"Chatter! Windekind's chatter!" said Pluizer. "Phantoms — illusions! There are only people — and myself. Do you fancy that any kind of god could take pleasure in anything on this earth — such a medley as there is here to be ruled over? Moreover, such a Great Light would not leave so many here — in the darkness."

"But those stars! Those stars!" cried Johannes; as if expecting that visible splendor to protest for him against this statement.

"The stars! Do you know, little fellow, what you are chattering about? Those lights up there are not like the lanterns you see about you here. They are all worlds — every one of them much larger than this world with its thousands of cities — and in the midst of them we swing like a speck of dust. There is no above nor below. There are worlds on all sides of us — nothing but worlds, and there is no *end* to them."

"No, no!" cried Johannes in terror, "do not say so! I see little lights on a great, dark plain above me."

"Yes, you can see nothing but little lights. If you gazed up all your life, you would see nothing else than little lights upon a dark plain above you. But you can, you *must* know that the universe — in the midst of which this little clod with its pitiful swarm of dotards is as nothing — shall vanish into nothingness. So speak no more of 'the stars' as if they were but a few dozens. It is foolishness."

Johannes was silenced.

"Come on," said Pluizer. "Now we will go to see something cheerful."

At intervals they were greeted by strains of music in lovely, lingering waves of sound. On a dark canal stood a large house, out of whose many tall windows the light was streaming

brightly. A long line of carriages stood in front of it. The stamping of the horses rang with a hollow sound in the stillness of the night, and they were throwing "yeses" with their heads. The light sparkled on the silver trappings of the harness, and on the varnish of the vehicles.

Indoors, it was dazzlingly bright. Johannes stood gazing, half-blinded, in the glare of hundreds of varicolored lights, of mirrors and flowers.

Graceful figures glided past the windows, bowing to one another, laughing, and gesturing. Far back in the room moved richly dressed people, with lingering step or with rapid, swaying turns. A confused sound of laughter and of cheerful voices, sliding steps and rustling garments reached the street, borne upon the waves of that soft, entrancing music which Johannes had already heard from afar. In the street, close by the windows, stood a few dark figures, whose faces only — strange and dissimilar — were lighted by the splendor at which they were gazing so intently.

"That is fine! That is splendid!" cried Johannes. He greatly enjoyed the sight of the color and light and the many flowers. "What is going on there? May we go in?"

"Really, do you think this beautiful, too? Or perhaps you would prefer a rabbit-hole! Just look at the people — laughing, bowing, and glittering! See how dignified and spruce the men are, and how gay and smart the ladies. And how devoted they are to the dancing, as though it were the most important matter in the world."

Johannes thought again of the ball in the rabbit-hole, and he saw a great deal that reminded him of it. But here everything was grander and more brilliant. The young ladies in their rich array seemed to him, when they lifted their long white arms, and turned their heads half aside in dancing, as beautiful as the elves. The servants moved around majestically, offering delicious drinks — with respectful bows.

"How splendid! How splendid!" cried Johannes.

"Very pretty, is it not?" said Pluizer. "But you must look

a little farther than just to the end of your nose. You see nothing now, do you, but lovely, laughing faces? Well, almost all those smiles are false and affected. Those kindly old ladies at the side there sit like anglers around a pond; their young girls are the bait, the gentlemen are the fishes. However well they like to chat together, they enviously begrudge one another every catch. If one of those young ladies is pleased, it is because she is dressed more beautifully, or attracts more attention than the others. And the pleasure of the men chiefly consists in those bare arms and necks. Behind all those laughing eyes and friendly lips lurks something quite different. Even those apparently obsequious servants are far from being respectful. If it suddenly became clear what each one really thought, the party would soon break up."

And as Pluizer pointed it out to him, Johannes plainly saw the affectation in faces and gestures; and the vanity, envy, and weariness which peeped from behind the smiling masks, or suddenly appeared as soon as they were laid aside.

"Well," said Pluizer, "they must do as they think best. Such people must amuse themselves, and this is the only way they know."

Johannes felt that some one was standing behind him, and he looked round. It was the well-known, tall figure. The pale face was whimsically lighted by the glare, so that the eyes formed large, dark depressions. He murmured softly to himself, and pointed with a finger into the lighted palace.

"Look!" said Pluizer. "He is making another selection."

Johannes looked where the finger pointed. He saw the old lady, even as she was speaking, shut her eyes and put her hand to her head, and the beautiful young girl stay her slow step, and stare before her with a slight shiver.

"When?" asked Pluizer of Death.

"That is my affair," said the latter.

"I should like to show Johannes this same company still another time," said Pluizer, with a wink and a grin. "May I?"

"To-night?" asked Death.

"Why not?" said Pluizer. "In that place is neither hour nor time. What now is has always been, and what is to be, already is."

"I cannot go with you," said Death. "I have too much to do; but speak the name that we both know, and you can find the way without me."

They went on — some distance — through the lonely streets, where the gas-lights flickered in the night wind, and the dark, cold water rippled along the sides of the canal. The soft music grew fainter and fainter, and then died away in the great calm that rested upon the city.

Suddenly there rang out from on high, with full metallic reverberation, a loud and festive melody.

It dropped straight down from the tall tower upon the sleeping town — into the sad, overshadowed spirit of Little Johannes. Surprised, he looked up. The melody of the clock continued, in calm clear tones which jubilantly rose, and sharply broke the deathly stillness. Those blithe notes — that festal song — seemed strange to him in the midst of still sleep and dark sorrow.

"That is the clock," said Pluizer. "It is always just as jolly — year in, year out. Every hour, it sings the selfsame song, with the same vim and gusto. In the night time, it sounds jollier than it does in the daytime; as if the clock were glad it has no need of sleep — that it can always sing just as happily when thousands are weeping and suffering. But it sings most merrily whenever any one is dead."

Still again the joyful sound rang out.

"One day, Johannes," continued Pluizer, "in a quiet room behind such a window as that, a feeble light will be burning — a dim and flickering light — making the shadows waver on the wall. There will be no sound in the room save now and then a soft, suppressed sob. A bed will be standing there, with white curtains, and long shadows in the folds. In that bed something will be lying — white and still. That

will have been Little Johannes. Then joyously will that selfsame song break out and loudly and lustily enter the room to celebrate the hour of his decease."

Separated by long intervals, twelve heavy strokes resounded through the air. Johannes felt at once as if he were in a dream; he no longer walked, but floated a little way above the street, his hand in Pluizer's. The houses and lamp-posts sped by in rapid flight. The houses stood less close together now. They formed broken rows, with dark mysterious gaps between, where the gas-lamps lighted pits and pools, rubbish and rafters, in a capricious way. At last came a large gateway with heavy columns and a high railing. As quick as a wink they were over it, and down upon some damp grass, near a big heap of sand. Johannes fancied he was in a garden, for he heard around them the rustling of trees.

"Now pay attention, Johannes, and then insist, if you can, that I am not able to do more than Windekind."

Then Pluizer called aloud a short and doleful name which made Johannes shudder. From all sides, the sound echoed in the darkness, and the wind bore it up whistling and whirling until it died away in the upper air.

Then Johannes noticed that the grass-blades reached above his head, and that the small pebble which until now lay at his feet was in front of his face.

Near him, Pluizer — just as small as himself — grasped the stone with both hands, and, exerting all his strength, turned it over. Confused cries of shrill, high-pitched little voices rose up from the cleared ground.

"Hey! Who is doing that? What does that mean? Blockhead!" shouted the voices.

Johannes saw black objects running hurriedly past one another. He recognized the brisk black tumble-bug, the shining brown earwig with his fine pinchers, big humpbacked ants, and snake-like millipedes.

In the middle of them a long earth-worm pulled himself, quick as lightning, back into his hole.

Pluizer tore impatiently through the raving, scolding crowd up to the worm-hole.

"Hey, there! you long, naked lout! Come to daylight with your pointed red nose," he cried.

"What do you want?" asked the worm, out of the depths.

"You must come out because I want to go in. Do you hear? You bald dirt-eater!"

The worm stretched his pointed head cautiously out of the opening, felt all around with it a number of times, and then slowly dragged his bare, ringed body farther toward the surface.

Pluizer looked round at the other creatures that were crowding about him in their curiosity.

"One of you go before us to light the way. No, Black-beetle, you are too big; and you, with the thousand feet — you would make me dizzy. Hey, there, Earwig, I fancy your looks! Come along, and carry the light in your pincers. Bundle away, Black-beetle, and look around for a will-o'-the-wisp, or bring a torch of rottenwood."

The creatures, awed by his commanding voice, obeyed him.

Then they went down into the worm-hole — the earwig in front with the shining wood, then Pluizer, then Johannes. It was a very dark and narrow passage. Johannes saw the grains of sand dimly lighted by the faint bluish flicker of the torch. They looked as large as stones — half polished, and rubbed to a smooth, firm wall by the body of the worm, who now followed, full of curiosity. Johannes saw behind him its pointed head — now thrust quickly out in front, and then waiting for the long part behind to pull up to it.

They went in silence a long way down. When the path became too steep for Johannes, Pluizer helped him. It seemed as if there never would be an end; ever new sand-grains, and still the earwig crept on, turning and bending with the winding of the passage. At last the way widened and the walls fell apart. The sand-grains were black and

wet, forming a vault above, where the water trickled in glistening streaks, and through which the roots of trees were stretched like stiffened serpents.

Suddenly, a perpendicular wall — high and black — rose up before Johannes' sight, cutting off everything in front of him. The earwig turned round.

"Hey, ho! Now it is a question of getting behind that. The worm knows all about it; he is at home here."

"Come, show us the way!" said Pluizer.

The worm slowly pulled its articulate body up to the black wall, and touched and tested it. Johannes saw that it was of wood. Here and there it was decayed into brownish powder. In one of these places the worm bored through, and with three push-and-pulls the long, supple body slipped within.

"Now you!" said Pluizer, and he shoved Johannes into the little round opening. For an instant, the latter thought he should be stifled in the soft, moist mold; then he felt his head free, and with some trouble he worked his way completely through. A large space appeared to lie beyond. The floor was hard and damp — the air thick, and intolerably close. Johannes dared scarcely to breathe, and waited in mute terror.

He heard Pluizer's voice. It had a hollow ring, as if in a great cellar.

"Here, Johannes, follow me."

He felt the ground rise up before him to a mountain. With the aid of Pluizer's hand he climbed this, in deepest darkness. He seemed to be walking over a garment that gave way under his tread. He stumbled over hollows and hillocks, following Pluizer, who led him to a level spot where he clung in place by some long stems that bent in his hands like reeds.

"Here is a good place to stop. A light!" cried Pluizer.

The dim light showed in the distance, rising and falling with its bearer. The nearer it came and the more its faint glow filled the space, the more terrible was Johannes' distress.

The mountain he had traveled over was long and white.

The reeds to which he was clinging were brown, and fell below in lustrous rings and waves.

He recognized the straight form of a human being; and the cold level on which he stood was the forehead.

Before him, like two deep dark caverns, lay the insunken eyes, and the blue light shone over the thin nose, and the ashen lips opened in a rigid, dismal death-grin.

Pluizer gave a shrill laugh, that was immediately stifled by the damp, wooden walls.

"Is not this a surprise, Johannes?"

The long worm came creeping on between the folds of the shroud; it pushed itself cautiously up over the chin, and slipped through the rigid lips into the black mouth-hole.

"This was the beauty of the ball — the one you thought more lovely than an elf. Then, sweet perfume streamed from her clothes and hair; then her eyes sparkled, and her lips laughed. Look *now* at her!"

With all his terror, there was doubt in Johannes' eyes. So soon? Just now so glorious — and already . . . ?

"Do you not believe me?" sneered Pluizer. "A half-century lies between then and now. There is neither hour nor time. What once was shall always be, and what is to be has already been. You cannot conceive of it, but you must believe it. Here all is truth — all that I show you is true — true! Windekind could not say that."

And with a grin Pluizer skipped around on the dead face, performing the most odious antics. He sat on an eyebrow, and lifted up an eyelid by the long lashes. The eye which Johannes had seen sparkle with joy was staring in the dim light — a dull and wrinkled white.

"Now — forward!" cried Pluizer. "There happens to be more to see."

The worm appeared, slowly crawling out of the right corner of the mouth; and the frightful journey was resumed. Not back again, but over new ways equally long and dreary.

"Now we come to an old one," said the earth-worm, as a

black wall again shut off the way. "This has been here a long time."

It was less horrible than the former one. Johannes only saw a confused heap, with discolored bones protruding. Hundreds of worms and insects were silently busy with it. The light alarmed them.

"Where do you come from? Who brings a light here? We have no use for it!"

And they sped away into the folds and hollows. Yet they recognized a fellow-being.

"Have you been next door?" the worms inquired. "The wood is hard yet."

The first worm answered, "No!"

"He wants to keep that morsel for himself," said Pluizer softly to Johannes.

They went farther. Pluizer explained things and pointed out to Johannes those whom he had known. They came to a misformed face, with staring, protruding eyes, and thick black lips and cheeks.

"This was a stately gentleman," said he gaily. "You ought to have seen him — so rich, so purse-proud and conceited. He retains his puffed-up appearance."

And so it went on. Besides these there were meagre, emaciated forms with white hair that reflected blue in the feeble light; and little children with large heads and aged, wizened faces.

"Look! These have grown old since they died," said Pluizer.

They came to a man with a full beard, whose white teeth gleamed between the drawn lips. In the middle of his forehead was a little round black hole.

"This one lent Hein a helping hand. Why not a bit more patient? He would have come here just the same."

And there were still more passages — recent ones — and other straight forms with rigid, grinning faces, and motionless, folded hands.

"I am going no farther now," said the earwig. "I do not know the way beyond this."

"Let us turn back," said the worm.

"One more, one more!" cried Pluizer.

So on they marched.

"Everything you see exists," said Pluizer as they proceeded.

"It is all real. One thing only is not real. That is yourself, Johannes. You are not here, and you *cannot* be here."

And he burst out laughing as he saw the frightened and vacant look on Johannes' face at this sally.

"This is the last — actually the last."

"The way stops short here. I will go no farther," said the earwig, peevishly.

"Well, I mean to go farther," said Pluizer; and where the way ended he began digging with both hands.

"Help me, Johannes!" Without resistance Johannes sadly obeyed, and began scooping up the moist, loose earth.

They drudged on in silence until they came to the black wood.

The worm had drawn in its ringed head, and backed out of sight. The earwig dropped the light and turned away.

"They cannot get in — the wood is too new," said he, retreating.

"I shall!" said Pluizer, and with his crooked fingers he tore long white cracking splinters out of the wood.

A fearful pressure lay on poor Johannes. Yet he had to do it — he could not resist.

At last, the dark space was open. Pluizer snatched the light and scrambled inside.

"Here, here!" he called, and ran toward the other end.

But when Johannes had come as far as the hands, that lay folded upon the breast, he was forced to stop. He stared at the thin, white fingers, dimly lighted on the upper side. He recognized them at once. He knew the form of the fingers and the creases in them, as well as the shape of the long nails

now dark and discolored. He recognized a brown spot on the forefinger.

They were his own hands.

"Here, here!" called Pluizer from the head. "Look! do you know him?"

Poor Johannes tried to stand up, and go to the light that beckoned him, but his strength gave way. The little light died into utter darkness, and he fell senseless.

XII

HE had sunk into a deep sleep — to depths where no dreams come.

In slowly rising from those shades to the cool grey morning light, he passed through dreams, varied and gentle, of former times. He awoke, and they glided from his spirit like dew-drops from a flower. The expression of his eyes was calm and mild while they still rested upon the throngs of lovely images.

Yet, as if shunning the glare of day, he closed his eyes to the light. He saw again what he had seen the morning before. It seemed to him far away, and long ago; yet hour by hour there came back the remembrance of everything — from the dreary dawn to the awful night. He could not believe that all those horrible things had occurred in a single day; the beginning of his misery seemed so remote — lost in grey mists.

The sweet dreams faded away, leaving no trace behind. Pluizer shook him, and the gloomy day began — dull and colorless — the forerunner of many, many others.

Yet what he had seen the night before on that fearful journey stayed in his mind. Had it been only a frightful vision?

When he asked Pluizer about it, shyly, the latter looked at him queerly and scoffingly.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Johannes did not see the leer in his eye, and asked if it had really happened — he still saw it all so sharp and clear.

"How silly you are, Johannes! Indeed, such things as that can never happen."

Johannes did not know what to think.

"We will soon put you to work; and then you will ask no more such foolish questions."

So they went to Doctor Cijfer, who was to help Johannes find what he was seeking.

While in the crowded street, Pluizer suddenly stood still, and pointed out to Johannes a man in the throng.

"Do you remember him?" asked Pluizer, bursting into a laugh when Johannes grew pale and stared at the man in horror.

He had seen him the night before — deep under the ground.

The doctor received them kindly, and imparted his wisdom to Johannes who listened for hours that day, and for many days thereafter.

The doctor had not yet found what Johannes was seeking; but was very near it, he said. He would take Johannes as far as he himself had gone, and then together they would surely find it.

Johannes listened and learned, diligently and patiently, day after day and month after month. He felt little hope, yet he comprehended that he must go on, now, as far as possible. He thought it strange that, seeking the light, the farther he went the darker it grew. Of all he learned, the beginning was the best; but the deeper he penetrated the duller and darker it became. He began with plants and animals — with everything about him — and if he looked a long while at them, they turned to figures. Everything resolved itself into figures — pages full of them. Doctor Cijfer thought that fine, and he said the figures brought light to him; — but it was darkness to Johannes.

Pluizer never left him, and pressed and urged him on, if he grew disheartened and weary. He spoiled for him every moment of enjoyment or admiration.

Johannes was amazed and delighted as he studied and saw how exquisitely the flowers were constructed; how they formed the fruit, and how the insects unwittingly aided the work.

"That is wonderful," said he. "How exactly everything is calculated, and deftly, delicately formed!"

"Yes, amazingly formed," said Pluizer. "It is a pity that the greater part of that deftness and fineness comes to naught.

How many flowers bring forth fruit, and how many seeds grow to be trees?"

"But yet everything seems to be made according to a great plan," said Johannes. "Look! the bees seek honey for their own use, and do not know that they are aiding the flowers; and the flowers allure the bees by their color. It is a plan, and they both unfold it, without knowing it."

"That is fine in sound, but it fails in fact. When the bees get a chance they bite a hole deep down in the flower, and upset the whole intricate arrangement. A cunning craftsman that, to let a bee make sport of him!"

And when he came to the study of men and animals — their wonderful construction — matters went still worse.

In all that looked beautiful to Johannes, or ingenious, Pluizer pointed out the incompleteness and defects. He showed him the great army of ills and sorrows that can assail mankind and animals, with preference for the most loathesome and most hideous.

"That designer, Johannes, was very cunning, but in everything he made he forgot something, and man has a busy time trying as far as possible to patch up those defects. Just look about you! An umbrella, a pair of spectacles — even clothing and houses — everything is human patchwork. The design is by no means adhered to. But the designer never considered that people could have colds, and read books, and do a thousand other things for which his plan was worthless. He has given his children swaddling-clothes without reflecting that they would outgrow them. By this time nearly all men have outgrown their natural outfits. Now they do everything for themselves, and have absolutely no further concern with the designer and his scheme. Whatever he has not given them they saucily and selfishly take; and when it is obviously his will that they should die, they sometimes, by various devices, evade the end."

"But it is their own fault!" cried Johannes. "Why do they wilfully withdraw from nature?"

"Oh, stupid Johannes! If a nursemaid lets an innocent child play with fire, and the child is burned, who is to blame? The ignorant child, or the maid who knew that the child would burn itself? And who is at fault if men go astray from nature, in pain and misery? Themselves, or the All-wise Designer, to whom they are as ignorant children?"

"But they are not ignorant. They know . . ."

"Johannes, if you say to a child, 'Do not touch that fire; it will hurt,' and then the child does touch it, because it knows not what pain is, can you claim freedom from blame, and say, 'The child was not ignorant?' You knew when you spoke, that it would not heed your warning. Men are as foolish and stupid as children. Glass is fragile and clay is soft; yet He who made man, and considered not his folly, is like him who makes weapons of glass, careless lest they break — or bolts of clay, not expecting them to bend."

These words fell upon Johannes' soul like drops of liquid fire, and his heart swelled with a great grief that supplanted the former sorrow, and often caused him to weep in the still, sleepless hours of the night.

Ah, sleep! sleep! There came a time after long days when sleep was to him the dearest thing of all. In sleep there was no thinking — no sorrow; and his dreams always carried him back to the old life. It seemed delightful to him, as he dreamed of it; yet, by day he could not remember how things had been. He only knew that the sadness and longing of earlier times were better than the dull, listless feeling of the present. Once he had grievously longed for Windekind — once he had waited, hour after hour, on Robinetta. How delightful that had been!

Robinetta! Was he still longing? The more he learned, the less he longed — because that feeling, also, was dissected, and Pluizer explained to him what love really was. Then he was ashamed, and Doctor Cijfer said that he could not yet reduce it to figures, but that very soon he would be able to. And thus it grew darker and darker about Little Johannes.

He had a faint feeling of gratitude that he had not recognized Robinetta on his awful journey with Pluizer.

When he spoke of it, Pluizer said nothing, but laughed slyly; and Johannes knew that he had not been spared this out of pity.

When Johannes was neither learning nor working, Pluizer made use of the hours in showing him the people. He took him everywhere; into the hospitals where lay the sick — long rows of pale, wasted faces, with dull or suffering expressions. In those great wards a frightful silence reigned, broken only by coughs and groans. And Pluizer pointed out to him those who never again would leave those halls. And when, at a fixed hour, streams of people poured into the place to visit their sick relations, Pluizer said: "Look! These all know that they too will sometime enter this gloomy house, to be borne away from it in a black box."

"How can they ever be cheerful?" thought Johannes.

And Pluizer took him to a tiny upper room, pervaded with a melancholy twilight, where the distant tones of a piano in a neighboring house came, dreamily and ceaselessly. There, among the other patients, Pluizer showed him one who was staring in a stupid way at a narrow sunbeam that slowly crept along the wall.

"Already he has lain there seven long years," said Pluizer. "He was a sailor, and has seen the palms of India, the blue seas of Japan, and the forests of Brazil. During all the long days of those seven long years he has amused himself with that little sunbeam and the piano-playing. He cannot ever go away, and may still be here for seven more years."

After this, Johannes' most dreadful dream was of waking in that little room — in the melancholy twilight — with those far-away sounds, and nothing ever more to see than the waning and waxing light.

Pluizer took him also into the great cathedrals, and let him listen to what was being said there. He took him to festivals, to great ceremonies, and into the heart of many homes.

Johannes learned to know men, and sometimes it happened that he was led to think of his former life; of the fairy-tales that Windekind had told him, and of his own adventures. There were men who reminded him of the glow-worm who fancied he saw his deceased companions in the stars — or of the May-bug who was one day older than the other, and who had said so much about a calling. And he heard tales which made him think of Kribblegaww, the hero of the spiders; or of the eel who did nothing, and yet was fed because a fat king was most desired. He likened himself to the young May-bug who did not know what a calling was, and who flew into the light. He felt as if he also were creeping over the carpet, helpless and maimed, with a string around his body — a cutting string that Pluizer was pulling and twitching.

Ah! he would never again find the garden! When would the heavy foot come and crush him?

Pluizer ridiculed him whenever he spoke of Windekind, and, gradually, he began to believe that Windekind had never existed.

"But, Pluizer, is there then no little key? Is there nothing at all?"

"Nothing, nothing. Men and figures. *They* are all real — they exist — no end of figures!"

"Then you have deceived me, Pluizer! Let me leave off — do not make me seek any more — let me alone!"

"Have you forgotten what Death said? You were to become a man — a complete man."

"I will not — it is dreadful!"

"You must — you have made your choice. Just look at Doctor Cijfer. Does he find it dreadful? Grow to be like him."

It was quite true. Doctor Cijfer always seemed calm and happy. Untiring and imperturbable, he went his way — studying and instructing, contented and even-tempered.

"Look at him," said Pluizer. "He sees all, and yet sees nothing. He looks at men as if he himself were another

kind of being who had no concern about them. He goes amid disease and misery like one invulnerable, and consorts with Death like one immortal. He longs only to understand what he sees, and he thinks everything equally good that comes to him in the way of knowledge. He is satisfied with everything, as soon as he understands it. You ought to become so, too."

"But I never can."

"That is true, but it is not my fault."

In this hopeless way their discussions always ended. Johannes grew dull and indifferent, seeking and seeking — what for or why, he no longer knew. He had become like the many to whom Wistik had spoken.

The winter came, but he scarcely observed it.

One chilly, misty morning, when the snow lay wet and dirty in the streets, and dripped from trees and roofs, he went with Pluizer to take his daily walk.

In a city square he met a group of young girls carrying school-books. They stopped to throw snow at one another — and they laughed and romped. Their voices rang clearly over the snowy square. Not a footstep was to be heard, nor the sound of a vehicle — only the tinkling bells of the horses, or the rattling of a shop door; and the joyful laughing rang loudly through the stillness.

Johannes saw that one of the girls glanced at him, and then kept looking back. She had on a black hat, and wore a gay little cloak. He knew her face very well, but could not think who she was. She nodded to him — and then again.

"Who is that? I know her."

"That is possible. Her name is Maria. Some call her Robinetta."

"No, that cannot be. She is not like Windekind. She is like any other girl."

"Ha, ha, ha! She cannot be like *nobody*. But she is what she is. You have been longing to see her, and now I will take you to her."

THE QUEST

III

"No! I do not want to go. I would rather have seen her dead, like the others."

And Johannes did not look round again, but hurried on, muttering:

"This is the last! There is nothing — nothing!"

XIII

THE clear warm sunlight of an early spring morning streamed over the great city. Bright rays entered the little room where Johannes lived, and on the low ceiling there quivered and wavered a great splash of light, reflected from the water rippling in the moat.

Johannes sat before the window in the sunshine, gazing out over the town. Its aspect was entirely altered. The grey fog had floated away, and a lustrous blue vapor enfolded the end of the long street and the distant towers. The slopes of the slate roofs glistened — silver-white. All the houses showed clear lines and bright surfaces in the sunlight, and there was a warm pulsing in the pale blue air. The water seemed alive. The brown buds of the elm trees were big and glossy, and clamorous sparrows were fluttering among the branches.

As he gazed at all this, Johannes fell into a strange mood. The sunshine brought to him a sweet stupor — a blending of real luxury and oblivion. Dreamily he gazed at the glittering ripples — the swelling elm-tree buds, and he listened to the chirping of the sparrows. There was gladness in their notes.

Not in a long time had he felt so susceptible to subtle impressions — nor so really happy.

This was the old sunshine that he remembered. This was the sun that used to call him out-of-doors to the garden, where he would lie down on the warm ground, looking at the grasses and green things in front of him. There, nestled in the lee of an old wall, he could enjoy at his ease the light and heat.

It was just right in that light! It gave that safe-at-home feeling — such as he remembered long ago, in his mother's arms. His mind was full of memories of former times, but he neither wept for nor desired them. He sat still and

dreamed — wishing only that the sun would continue to shine.

“What are you moping about there, Johannes?” cried Pluizer. “You know I do not approve of dreaming.”

Johannes raised his pensive eyes, imploringly.

“Let me stay a little longer,” said he. “The sun is so good.”

“What do you find in the sun?” asked Pluizer. “It is nothing but a big candle; it does not make a bit of difference whether you are in candle-light or sunlight. Look! see those shadows and dashes of light on the street. They are nothing but the varied effect of one little light that burns steadily — without a flicker. And that light is really a tiny flame, which shines upon a mere speck of the earth. There, beyond that blue — above and beneath us — it is dark — cold and dark! It is night there — now and ever.”

But his words had no effect on Johannes. The still warm sunshine penetrated him, and filled his whole being with light and peace.

Pluizer led him away to the chilly house of Doctor Cijfer. For a little while the image of the sun hovered before his vision, then slowly faded away; and by the middle of the day all was dark again.

When the evening came and he passed through the town once more, the air was sultry and full of the stuffy smells of spring. Everything was reeking, and he felt oppressed in the narrow streets. But in the open squares he smelled the grass and the buds of the country beyond; and he saw the spring in the tranquil little clouds above it all — in the tender flush of the western sky.

The twilight spread a soft grey mist, full of delicate tints, over the town. It was quiet everywhere — only a street-organ in the distance was playing a mournful tune. The buildings seemed black spectres against the crimson sky — their fantastic pinnacles and chimneys reaching up like countless arms.

When the sun threw its last rays out over the great town, it seemed to Johannes that it gave him a kind smile — kind

as the smile that forgives a folly. And the sweet warmth stroked his cheeks, caressingly.

Then a great sadness came into Johannes' heart — so great that he could go no farther. He took a deep breath, and lifted up his face to the wide heavens. The spring was calling him, and he heard it. He would answer — he would go. He was all contrition and love and forgiveness.

He looked up longingly, and tears fell from his sorrowful eyes.

"Come, Johannes! Do not act so oddly — people are looking at you," said Pluizer.

Long, monotonous rows of houses stretched out on both sides — dark and gloomy — offensive in the soft spring air, discordant in the spring-time melody.

People sat at their doors and on the stoops to enjoy the season. To Johannes it was a mockery. The dirty doors stood open, and the musty rooms within awaited their occupants. In the distance the organ still prolonged its melancholy tones.

"Oh, if I could only fly away — far away to the dunes and to the sea!"

But he had to return to the high-up little room; and that night he lay awake.

He could not help thinking of his father and the long walks he had taken with him, when he followed a dozen steps behind, and his father wrote letters for him in the sand. He thought of the places under the bushes where the violets grew, and of the days when he and his father had searched for them. All night he saw the face of his father — as it was when he sat beside him evenings by the still lamplight — watching him, and listening to the scratching of his pen.

Every morning after this he asked Pluizer to be allowed to go once more to his home and to his father — to see once again his garden and the dunes. He noticed now that he had had more love for his father than for Presto and for his little room, since it was of him that he asked.

"Only tell me how he is, and if he is still angry with me for staying away so long."

Pluizer shrugged his shoulders. "Even if you knew, how would it help you?"

Still the spring kept calling him—louder and louder. Every night he dreamed of the dark green moss on the hillslopes, and of sunbeams shining through the young and tender, verdure.

"It cannot long stay this way," thought Johannes. "I cannot bear it."

And often when he could not sleep he rose up softly, went to the window, and looked out at the night. He saw the sleepy, feathery little clouds drifting slowly over the disk of the moon to float peacefully in a sea of soft, lustrous light. He thought of the distant dunes—*asleep, now, in the sultry night*—how wonderful it must be in the low woods where not a leaf would be stirring, and where it was full of the fragrance of moist moss and young birch-sprouts. He fancied he could hear, in the distance the swelling chorus of the frogs, which hovered so mystically over the plains; and the song of the only bird which can accompany the solemn stillness—whose lay begins so soft and plaintive and breaks off so suddenly, making the silence seem yet deeper. And it all was calling—calling him. He dropped his head upon his arms on the window-sill, and sobbed.

"I cannot bear it. I shall die soon if I cannot go."

When Pluizer roused him the following morning, he was still sitting by the window, where he had fallen asleep with his head on his arm.

The days passed by—grew long and warm—and there came no change. Yet Johannes did not die, and had to bear his sorrow.

One morning Doctor Cijfer said to him:

"Come with me, Johannes. I have to visit a patient."

Doctor Cijfer was known to be a learned man, and many appealed to him to ward off sickness and death. Johannes had already accompanied him many times.

Pluizer was unusually frolicsome this morning. Again and again he stood on his head, danced and tumbled, and perpetrated all kinds of reckless tricks. His face wore a constant, mysterious grin, as if he had a surprise all ready for the springing. Johannes was very much afraid of him in this humor.

But Doctor Cijfer was as serious as ever.

They went a long way this morning — in a railway train and afoot. They went farther than at other times, for Johannes had never yet been taken outside the town.

It was a warm, sunny day. Looking out of the train, Johannes saw the great green meadows go by, with their long-plumed grass, and grazing cows. He saw white butterflies fluttering above the flower-decked ground, where the air was quivering with the heat of the sun.

And, suddenly, he felt a thrill. There lay, outspread, the long and undulating dunes!

"Now, Johannes!" said Pluizer, with a grin, "now you have your wish, you see."

Only half believing, Johannes continued to gaze at the dunes. They came nearer and nearer. The long ditches on both sides seemed to be whirling around their centre, and the lonely dwellings along the road sped swiftly past.

Then came some trees — thick-foliaged chestnut trees, bearing great clusters of red or white flowers — dark, blue-green pines — tall, stately linden trees.

It was true, then; he was going to see his dunes once more.

The train stopped and then the three went afoot, under the shady foliage.

Here was the dark-green moss — here were the round spots of sunshine on the ground — this was the odor of birch-sprouts and pine-needles.

"Is it true? Is it really true?" thought Johannes. "Am I going to be happy?"

His eyes sparkled, and his heart bounded. He began to believe in his happiness. He knew these trees, this ground; he had often walked over this wood-path.

They were alone on the way, yet Johannes felt forced to look round, as though some one were following them; and he thought he saw between the oak leaves the dark figure of a man who again and again remained hidden by the last turn in the path.

Pluizer gave him a cunning, uncanny look. Doctor Cijfer walked with long strides, looking down at the ground.

The way grew more and more familiar to him — he knew every bush, every stone. Then suddenly he felt a sharp pang, for he stood before his own house.

The chestnut tree in front of it spread out its large, hand-shaped leaves. Up to the very top the glorious white flowers stood out from the full round masses of foliage.

He heard the sound he knew so well of the opening of the door, and he breathed the air of his own home. He recognized the hall, the doors, everything — bit by bit — with a painful feeling of lost familiarity. It was all a part of his life — his lonely, musing child-life.

He had talked with all these things — with them he had lived in his own world of thought that he suffered no one to enter. But now he felt himself cut off from the old house, and dead to it all — its chambers, halls, and doorways. He felt that this separation was past recall, and as if he were visiting a churchyard — it was so sad and melancholy.

If only Presto had sprung to meet him it would have been less dismal — but Presto was certainly away or dead.

Yet where was his father?

He looked back to the open door and the sunny garden outside, and saw the man who had seemed to be following him, now striding up to the house. He came nearer and nearer, and seemed to grow larger as he approached. When he reached the door, a great chill shadow filled the entrance. Then Johannes recognized the man.

It was deathly still in the house, and they went up the stairs without speaking. There was one stair that always creaked when stepped upon — Johannes knew it. And now

he heard it creak three times. It sounded like painful groanings, but under the fourth footstep it was like a faint sob.

Upstairs Johannes heard a moaning—low and regular as the ticking of a clock. It was a dismal, torturing sound.

The door of Johannes' room stood open. He threw a frightened glance into it. The marvelous flower-forms of the hangings looked at him in stupid surprise. The clock had run down.

They went to the room from which the sounds came. It was his father's bedroom. The sun shone gaily in upon the closed, green curtains of the bed. Simon, the cat, sat on the window-sill in the sunshine. An oppressive smell of wine and camphor pervaded the place, and the low moaning sounded close at hand.

Johannes heard whispering voices, and carefully guarded footfalls. Then the green curtains were drawn aside.

He saw his father's face that had so often been in his mind of late. But it was very different now. The grave, kindly expression was gone and it looked strained and distressed. It was ashy pale, with deep brown shadows. The teeth were visible between the parted lips, and the whites of the eyes under the half-closed eyelids. His head lay sunken in the pillow, and was lifted a little with the regularity of the moans, falling each time wearily back again.

Johannes stood by the bed, motionless, and looked with wide, fixed eyes upon the well-known face. He did not know what he thought—he dared not move a finger; he dared not clasp those worn old hands lying limp on the white linen.

Everything around him grew black—the sun and the bright room, the verdure outdoors, and the blue sky as well—everything that lay behind him—it grew black, black, dense and impenetrable. And in that night he could see only the pale face before him, and could think only of the poor tired head—wearily lifted again and again, with the groan of anguish.

Directly, there came a change in this regular movement.

The moaning ceased, the eyelids opened feebly, the eyes looked inquiringly around, and the lips tried to say something.

"Father!" whispered Johannes, trembling, while he looked anxiously into the seeking eyes. The weary glance rested upon him, and a faint, faint smile furrowed the hollow cheeks. The thin closed hand was lifted from the sheet, and made an uncertain movement toward Johannes — then fell again, powerless.

"Come, come!" said Pluizer. "No scenes here!"

"Step aside, Johannes," said Doctor Cijfer, "we must see what can be done."

The doctor began his examination, and Johannes left the bed and went to stand by the window. He looked at the sunny grass and the clear sky, and at the broad chestnut leaves where the big flies sat — shining blue in the sunlight. The moaning began again with the same regularity.

A blackbird hopped through the tall grass in the garden — great red and black butterflies were hovering over the flower-beds, and there reached Johannes from out the foliage of the tallest trees the soft, coaxing coo of the wood-doves.

In the room the moaning continued — never ceasing. He had to listen to it — and it came regularly — as unpreventable as the falling drop that causes madness. In suspense he waited through each interval, and it always came again — frightful as the footstep of approaching death.

All out-of-doors was wrapped in warm, mellow sunlight. Everything was happy and basking in it. The grass-blades thrilled and the leaves sighed in the sweet warmth. Above the highest tree tops, deep in the abounding blue, a heron was soaring in peaceful flight.

Johannes could not understand — it was an enigma to him. All was so confused and dark in his soul. "How can all this be in me at the same time?" he thought.

"Is this really I? Is that my father — my own father? Mine — Johannes'?"

It was as if he spoke of a stranger. It was all a tale that he

had heard. Some one had told him of Johannes, and of the house where he lived, and of the father whom he had forsaken, and who was now dying. He himself was not that one — he had heard about him. It was a sad, sad story. But it did not concern himself.

But yes — yes — he was that same Johannes!

"I do not understand the case," said Doctor Cijfer, standing up. "It is a very obscure malady."

Pluizer stepped up to Johannes.

"Are you not going to give it a look, Johannes? It is an interesting case. The doctor does not know it."

"Leave me alone," said Johannes, without turning round. "I cannot think."

But Pluizer went behind him and whispered sharply in his ear, according to his wont:

"Cannot think! Did you fancy you could not think? There you are wrong. You must think. You need not be gazing into the green trees nor the blue sky. That will not help. Windekind is not coming. And the sick man there is going to die. You must have seen that as well as we. But what do you think his trouble is?"

"I do not know — I will not know!"

Johannes said nothing more, but listened to the moaning that had a plaintive and reproachful sound. Doctor Cijfer was writing notes in a little book. At the head of the bed sat the dark figure that had followed them. His head was bowed, his long hand extended toward the sufferer, and his deep-set eyes were fixed upon the clock.

The sharp whispering in his ear began again.

"What makes you look so sad, Johannes? You have your heart's desire now. There are the dunes, there the sunbeams through the verdure, there the flitting butterflies and the singing birds. What more do you want? Are you waiting for Windekind? If he be anywhere, he must be there. Why does he not come? Would he be afraid of this dark friend at the bedside? Yet always he was there!"

"Do you not see, Johannes, that it has all been imagination?"

"Do you hear that moaning? It sounds lighter than it did a while ago. You can know that it will soon cease altogether. But what of that? There must have been a great many such groans while you were running around outside in the garden among the wild-roses. Why do you stay here crying, instead of going to the dunes as you used to? Look outside! Flowers and fragrance and singing everywhere just as if nothing had happened. Why do you not take part in all that life and gladness?"

"First, you complained, and longed to be here; and after I have brought you where you wished to be, you still are not content. See! I will let you go. Stroll through the high grass — lie in the cool shade — let the flies buzz about you — inhale the fragrance of the fresh young herbs. I release you. Go, now! Find Windekind again!"

"You will not? Then do you now believe in me alone? Is what I have told you true? Do I lie, or does Windekind?"

"Listen to the moans! — so short and weak! They will soon cease."

"Do not look so agonized, Johannes. The sooner it is over the better. There could be no more long walks now; you will never again look for violets with him. With whom do you think he has taken his walks, during the past two years — while you were away? You cannot ask him now. You never will know. After this you will have to content yourself with me. If you had made my acquaintance a little earlier, you would not look so pitiful now. You are a long way yet from being what you ought to be. Do you think Doctor Cijfer in your place would look as you do? It would make him about as sad as that cat is — purring there in the sunshine. And it is well. What is the use of being so wretched? Did the flowers teach you that? They do not grieve when one of them is plucked. Is not that lucky? They know nothing, therefore they are happy. You have

only begun to know things; and now you must know everything, in order to be happy. I alone can teach you. All or nothing.

"Listen to me. What is the difference whether that is your father or not? He is a man who is dying; that is a common occurrence.

"Do you hear the moaning still? Very feeble, is it not? He is near his end."

Johannes looked toward the bed in fearful distress.

Simon, the cat, dropped from the window-seat, stretched himself, and curled up purring on the bed close beside the dying man.

The poor, tired head moved no more. It lay still, pressed into the pillow; yet from the half-open mouth there still came, at intervals, short, exhausted sounds.

They grew softer — softer — scarcely audible.

Then Death turned his dark eyes from the clock to rest them upon the down-sunken head. He raised his hand — and all was still.

An ashen shadow crept over the stiffening face.

Silence — dreary, lonely silence!

Johannes waited — waited.

But the recurring groans had ceased. All was still — utterly, awfully still.

The strain of the long hours of listening was suspended, and it seemed to Johannes as if his soul were released, and falling into black and bottomless depths.

He fell deeper and deeper. It grew stiller and darker around him.

Then he heard Pluizer's voice, as if from far away.

"Hey, ho! Another story told."

"That is good," said Doctor Cijfer. "Now you can find out what the trouble was. I leave that to you. I must away."

While still half in a dream, Johannes saw the gleam of burnished knives.

The cat ruffed up his back. It was cold next the body, and he sought the sunshine again.

Johannes saw Pluizer take a knife, examine it carefully, and approach the bed with it.

Then Johannes shook off his stupor. Before Pluizer could reach the bed he was standing in front of him.

"What are you going to do?" he asked. His eyes were wide open with horror.

"We are going to find out what it was," said Pluizer.

"No!" said Johannes; and his voice was as deep as a man's.

"What does that mean?" asked Pluizer, with a grim glare.

"Can you prevent me? Do you not know how strong I am?"

"You shall not!" said Johannes. He set his teeth and drew in a deep breath, looked steadily at Pluizer, and tried to stay his hand.

But Pluizer persisted. Then Johannes seized his wrists, and wrestled with him.

Pluizer was strong, he knew. He never yet had opposed him; but he struggled on with a fixed purpose.

The knife gleamed before his eyes. He saw sparks and red flames; yet he did not give in, but wrestled on.

He knew what would happen if he succumbed. He knew, for he had seen before. But it was his father that lay behind him, and he would not let it happen now.

And while they wrestled, panting, the dead body behind them lay rigid and motionless — just as it was the instant when silence fell — the whites of the eyes visible in a narrow strip, the corners of the mouth drawn up in a stiffened grin. The head, only, shook gently back and forth, as they both pushed against the bed in their struggle.

Still Johannes held firm, though his breath failed and he could see nothing. A veil of blood-red mist was before his eyes; yet he stood firm.

Then, gradually, the resistance of the two wrists in his grasp grew weaker. His muscles relaxed, his arms dropped limp beside his body, and his closed hands were empty.

When he looked up Pluizer had vanished. Death sat, alone, by the bed and nodded to him.

"You have done well, Johannes," said he.

"Will he come back?" whispered Johannes. Death shook his head.

"Never. He who once dares him will see him no more."

"And Windekind? Shall I not see Windekind again?"

The solemn man looked long and earnestly at Johannes. His regard was not now alarming, but gentle and serious, and attracted Johannes like a profound depth.

"I alone can take you to Windekind. Through me alone can you find the book."

"Then take me with you. There is no one left — take me, too! I want nothing more."

Again Death shook his head.

"You love men, Johannes. You do not know it, but you have always loved them. You must become a good man. It is a fine thing to be a good man."

"I do not want that — take me with you!"

"You mistake — you do want it: you cannot help it."

Then the tall, dark figure grew vague before Johannes' eyes — it faded into a filmy, grey mist adrift in the room — and passed away along the sunbeams.

Johannes bowed his head upon the side of the bed, and sobbed for the dead man.

XIV

A LONG time afterward, he lifted up his head. The sunbeams shone obliquely in, bringing a rosy glow. They resembled straight bars of gold.

"Father, father!" whispered Johannes.

Outside, the sun was pouring over everything a flood of shining, golden, glowing splendor. Every leaf hung motionless, and all was hushed in solemn worship of the sun.

Along with the light there fell into the room a gentle sighing — as if the sunbeams were singing.

"Sun-son! Sun-son!"

Johannes lifted up his head, and listened. It tingled in his ears.

"Sun-son! Sun-son!"

It was like Windekind's voice. He alone had named him that; should he call him now?

But he looked at the face beside him. He would listen no more.

"Poor, dear father!" he said.

But suddenly it rang again around him from all sides, so loud, so penetrating, that he trembled with his marvelous emotion.

"Sun-son! Sun-son!"

Johannes stood up and gazed outside. What light! What splendid light! It streamed over the high tree tops, it glistened amid the grass-blades, and sparkled in the shadow-patches. The whole air was filled with it up to the very sky where the first exquisite sunset clouds were flecking the blue.

Beyond the meadow, between the green trees and shrubs, he saw the dunes. Red gold lay along their slopes, and in their shadows hung the blue of the heavens.

They lay stretched out reposefully in their robe of tender tints. The delicate undulations of their expanse brought a

benediction — as does prayer. Johannes felt again as he had felt when Windekind taught him how to pray.

Was not that he, there, in the blue garment? Look! there in the heart of the light — shimmering in a maze of blue and gold. Was not that Windekind, beckoning him?

Johannes flew out of doors into the sunlight. For an instant he stood still. He felt the holy solemnity of the light, and scarcely dared to move where the foliage was so still.

Yet, there, in front of him, was the light figure again. It was Windekind! It surely was! His radiant face was turned toward him, and the lips were parted as if calling him. With his right hand he was beckoning. In his left he held aloft some object. In the tips of his slender fingers he held it, and it glittered and sparkled.

With a glad cry of joy and yearning, Johannes sped toward the beloved apparition. But with laughing face and waving hand, it floated before him, still beckoning him on. Sometimes it would drift low, and lingeringly skim the ground, to ascend again lightly and swiftly, and float farther off, like a feathery seed borne on by the wind.

Johannes himself longed to rise and fly as he had done long ago, in his dreams. But the earth held his feet, and his steps were heavy on the grassy ground. He was obliged to pick his way painfully through the bushes — their foliage rustling and scratching along his clothes — their branches brushing across his face. Panting with weariness he had to climb the mossy slopes of the dunes. Yet he followed untiringly — his eye never turned from Windekind's radiant apparition — from what was gleaming in the upraised hand.

There he was, in the middle of the dunes. The wild-roses, with their thousands of pale yellow cups, were blossoming in the glowing valleys, and gazing at the sunlight. And many other flowers were blooming there — bright blue, yellow, and purple. A sultry heat filled the little hollows, cherishing the fragrant herbs. Strong, resinous odors hung in the air. Johannes smelled them as he went — he smelled the wild

thyme, and the dry reindeer-moss which crackled under his feet. It was intoxicatingly delightful.

And he saw mottled field-moths fluttering in front of the lovely image he was following; also little black and red butterflies, and the sand-eye — the merry little moth with satiny wings of the most delicate blue.

Golden beetles that live on the wild-rose whirled around his head, and big bumblebees danced and hummed all about in the dry, scorched grass. How delightful it was! How happy he would be if only he were with Windekind.

But Windekind swept farther and farther away. He followed breathlessly. The big, pale-leaved thorn-bushes held him back, and hurt him with their briars. The fuzzy, silvery torch-plants shook their tall heads as he pushed them aside from his course. He scrambled up the sandy barriers, and wounded his hands with the prickly broom.

He pushed on through the low birch-wood where the grass was knee-high, and the water-birds flew up from the little pools which glistened among the shrubs. Dense, white-flowered hawthorns mingled their fragrance with that of the birch-leaves and the mint, which grew in great profusion in the swampy soil.

But there came an end to woods, and verdure, and fragrant flowers. Only the singular, pale blue sea-holly, growing amid the sear, colorless heath-grass.

On the top of the last high swell of the dunes Johannes saw Windekind's form. There was a blinding glitter from his upraised hand. Borne over from the other side by a cool breeze, a great, unceasing roar sounded mysteriously alluring. It was the sea. Johannes felt that he was nearing it, and he slowly climbed the last ascent. At the top, he fell on his knees and gazed upon the ocean.

As he got above the ridge, a rosy glow illumined him. The sunset clouds had drawn apart from the central light. Like a wide ring of welded blocks of stone, with glowing red edges,

they surrounded the sinking sun. Upon the sea was a broad path of living, crimson fire — a flaming, sparkling path leading to the distant gates of heaven.

Behind the sun, which could not yet be looked upon — in the depths of the light-grotto — were exquisite tints of intermingled blue and rose. Outside, the whole wide sky was lighted up with blood-red streaks, and dashes and fleckings of streaming fire.

Johannes watched — until the sun's disk touched the farthest end of that glowing path which led up to him.

Then he looked down, and very near was the bright form that he had followed. A boat, clear and glistening as crystal, drifted near the shore upon the broad, fiery way. At one end of the boat stood Windekind, alert and slender, with that golden object in his hand. At the other end, Johannes recognized the dark figure of Death.

"Windekind! Windekind!" cried Johannes. But as he approached the marvelous boat, he also looked toward the horizon. In the middle of the glowing space, surrounded by great fiery clouds, he saw a small, black figure. It grew larger and larger, and a man slowly drew near, calmly walking on the tossing fiery waters.

The glowing red waves rose and fell beneath his feet, but he walked tranquilly onward.

The man's face was pale, and his eyes were dark and deep — deep as the eyes of Windekind; but there was an infinitely gentle melancholy in their look such as Johannes had never seen in any other eyes.

"Who are you?" asked Johannes. "Are you a man?"

"I am more," was the reply.

"Art Thou Jesus — Art Thou God?" asked Johannes.

"Speak not those names!" said the figure. "They were holy and pure as sacerdotal robes, and precious as nourishing corn; yet they have become as husks before swine, and a jester's garb for fools. Name them not, for their meaning has become perverted, their worship a mockery. Let him

who would know me cast aside those names and listen to himself."

"I know Thee! I know Thee!" said Johannes.

"It was I who made you weep for men, while yet you did not understand your tears. It was I who caused you to love before you knew the meaning of your love. I was with you and you saw me not — I stirred your soul and you knew me not."

"Why do I first see Thee now?"

"The eyes which behold Me must be brightened by many tears. And not for yourself alone, but for Me, must you weep. Then I will appear to you and you shall recognize in Me an old friend."

"I know Thee! I recognized Thee! I want to be with Thee!"

Johannes stretched out his hands. But the man pointed to the glittering boat that was slowly drifting out upon the fiery path.

"Look!" said he; "that is the way to all you have longed for. There is no other. Without those two shall you not find it. Take your choice. There is the Great Light; there you would yourself be what you long to know. *There!*"—and he pointed to the dark East—"where human nature and its sorrows are, there lies my way. Not that errant light which has misled you, but *I*, will be your guide. You know now. Take your choice."

Then Johannes slowly turned away his eyes from Wind-kind's beckoning figure, and reached out his hands to the serious man. And with his guide, he turned to meet the chill night wind, and to tread the dreary road to the great, dark town where humanity was, with all its misery.

Sometime I may tell you more about Little Johannes; but it will not be like a fairy tale.

PART II

I

I HAVE said that I might perhaps have something more to tell about Little Johannes. Surely you have not thought I would not keep my word! People are not so very trustful in these days, nor so patient, either.

But now I am going to put you to confusion, by telling you what else happened to Little Johannes. Listen! It is worth your while. And the best thing of all is that it will be rather like a fairy story — even more so than what I have already told you.

And yet it is all true. Yes, it all really truly happened. Perhaps you will again be inclined to doubt; but when you are older — much, much older — you will perceive how true it is. It will be so much more pleasant for you to have faith in it, that I wish from my heart you may be able to. If you cannot, I am sorry for you; but at least be truthful. Therefore skip nothing, but read it all.

And should you happen to meet Johannes, I give you leave to speak with him about these matters, and to give him my regards. He might not answer, but he will not be offended. He is still rather small, but he has grown a bit.

The fine weather did not continue far into the evening. The splendid clouds which Johannes had seen above the sea, and out of which strode that dark figure, now betokened a thunder-storm. Before he reached the middle of the dunes again, the sunset sky and the starry heavens were obscured, and a wild, exhausting wind, filled with fine, misty rain, swept him on. Behind him the lightning played above the sea, and the thunder rolled as if the heavens were being torn asunder, and the planks of its floor tossed one by one into a great garret.

Johannes was not alarmed, but very happy. He felt the

close clasp of a warm, firm hand. It seemed as if he never yet had clung to a hand so perfect and so life-giving. Even the hand of Windekind seemed flimsy and feeble compared with this.

He thought that he now had reached the end of all his puzzles and difficulties. This may also have occurred to you. But how could that be possible when he was still such a mere stripling, and did not yet comprehend one half of all the marvelous things that had befallen him!

It may be that all has been plain to you. But it was not to him, although he may have thought so. He was yet only a little fellow without beard or moustache, and his voice was still that of a boy.

"My friend," said he to his Guide, "I know now that I have been bad — very bad. But now that you have come and I can cling to your hand, can I not redeem my faults? Is there still time?"

The dark figure kept silently and steadily on beside him in the storm and darkness. Johannes could see neither his eyes nor his features; he only heard the swishing and flapping of his garments — heavy with the rain. Then he asked again, somewhat anxiously, because the consolation he was yearning for was longer delayed than he expected:

"May I not sometime call myself a friend of yours? Am I not yet worthy of that? I have always so wanted to have a friend! That was the best thing in life, I thought — really the only thing I cared about. And now I have lost all my friends — my dog, Windekind, and my father. Am I too bad to deserve a true friend?"

Then there came an answer:

"When you can *be* a true friend, Johannes, then indeed you will find one."

There was consolation in the soft, low tones, and there was love and forgiveness; but the words were torturing.

"Bad, bad!" muttered Johannes, setting his teeth together. He wanted to cry, but he could not do that. That would have been to pity himself, and that was not in accordance with his Guide's reply. He had not been a good friend to his dog, nor to Windekind, nor to his father. He wished now that he could at once make amends for everything, but that could not be. It had been made clear.

It was desolate on the dunes, and dark as pitch. The wind was whistling through the reeds and the dwarf poplars, but there was nothing to be seen. How far away seemed the quiet sunlight now, the playful animals, and the flowers! Silently and swiftly the two strode on along a winding cart-track through the deep, wet sand, now and then stumbling over the ruts. It was the road that led to the town.

"I shall —" began Johannes again, resolutely lifting his head. But there he halted.

"Who says 'I shall'? Who knows what he will do? Can Johannes say, I am?"

"I am sorry and I am ashamed, and I wish to be better," said Johannes.

"That is well," said the soft low voice. And the tears started in Johannes' eyes. He clung close to his Guide, trembling slightly as they went.

"Teach me, my Father. I want to know how to be better."

"Not 'Father,' Johannes. We both have the same Father. You must call me Brother."

At that word Johannes looked timidly up at his Guide with startled face and wide-open eyes. In a flash of the steel-blue lightning, Johannes saw the pale brow, with the dark eyes turned kindly toward him. The hair of his Guide was matted and dripping with water, as were also his beard and his moustache. The locks clung to his white gleaming forehead, and his eyes glowed with an inner light. Johannes felt a boundless love and adoration, and at the same time an inexpressible

compassion. "My brother!" thought he. "Oh, good, good man!"

And he said: "How wet you are! Put my jacket over your head. I do not need it."

But in the darkness his hand was gently restrained, and they hurried on while the sweat and the rain were commingled upon their faces.

After a while his Guide said to him:

"Johannes, pay attention to me, for I am going to say something to you that you must bear in mind. Your true life is only now beginning, and it is difficult to live a good life. If only you could remember what I am now telling you, you would never again be unhappy. Neither life nor people would be able to make you unhappy. And yet it will not prove thus — because you will forget."

There was silence for a while, broken only by the whistling of the wind, the flapping of their garments, and their rapid breathing — for they were walking very fast.

"Train your memory, therefore; for without an exact and retentive memory nothing good is attained. And mark this well; not the small and transient must you be mindful of, but the great and the eternal."

Then there was a flash of lightning, and it seemed as if the heavens were being consumed in the white fire, while a terrific peal of thunder immediately followed, directly over their heads.

But Johannes' thoughts were dwelling attentively upon the words he had heard, and he was neither frightened nor disquieted. He raised his head, proud and glad that he was not afraid, and looked, with wide-open eyes, into the high, dark dome of the heavens.

"This is the great and the eternal, is it not?" he asked. "This I will bear in mind."

But his Guide said:

"It is not the thunder and the lightning which you must

bear in mind, for they are temporal and will often recur; but that you were unafraid, and bravely held up your countenance — *that* you must remember, and the reason why you did so. For it will thunder and lighten at other times, and you will be afraid. But even now — at this instant — it could strike you dead. Why do you not fear now?"

"Because you are with me," said Johannes.

"Well, then, Johannes, remember this; you always have me with you."

They were silent for a long while, and Johannes was thinking over these noble words. But he did not understand their import. If he were always to have his Leader with him, how could he forget? Then he asked, although he well knew what the reply would be:

"Are you, then, going to stay with me always?"

"Even as I always have been with you," was the unexpected answer.

"But I did not see you, then."

"And very soon again you will not see me; yet I shall be with you, just the same. Therefore, you must cultivate your memory, so that it will remind you when your eyes see not. Who that is forgetful can be relied on? You have never been faithful, Johannes, and you will forget me also. But I shall remain faithful, and you will bring me to mind. Then, when you have learned to bethink yourself, and are yourself a faithful friend, you shall have a brother and a friend."

The road was firmer now, and in the distance they saw the lights of the town. Close by, the orange-yellow window-squares were glimmering through the rain and darkness — the dwellings themselves being still invisible in the night. They saw the pools glisten, and they met a man. There was a hurried, heavy footstep — a glowing red cigar-tip. Johannes breathed the well-known, offensive, human atmosphere of wet garments and tobacco smoke. By the flashes of lightning

he could see all around him little white and grey cottages. He saw the gleaming street, far out in front of him — haystacks and barns — a fence along the way; everything suddenly sharp and livid.

Then a change came over him. At once, he was conscious of everything, as one, being awakened, is aware of a voice already heard in his dream.

He clearly felt himself to be an ordinary human being, like every one else. And his exalted companion was also an ordinary man. He saw both, just as the passers-by would see them; a man and a boy, wet with the rain, walking hand in hand. Windekind did not get wet in the rain.

As they neared the suburbs, it became lighter and more noisy. It was not the great city where Johannes had lived with Pluizer, but the small one where he was born and where he had gone to school.

And as the two approached, they heard, through the rushing of the rain and the rolling of the thunder, a lighter, indistinct sound which reminded Johannes so well of former times. It was a confused intermingling of voices, singing, a continual din of organ-grinding, sharp little sounds of trumpets and flutes, the reports of fire-crackers and rifle-shots, and now and then a shrill, discordant whistle, or the sound of a bell. It was the Fair!

"Be careful now, Johannes. Here are people," said his companion.

Johannes gave a start. His task was to begin. He could no longer rail at human beings, nor disclaim his own human origin. He knew now that he had been erring, and he resolved to mend his ways. Had not good Death told him it was well worth while to be a good man? So now he would live with men, and try to become a good man himself; to relieve pain, to lighten grief, and to bring beauty and happiness into the

lives of others. Was not that what He was teaching — He at whose blessed side he should henceforth go?

But he was greatly distressed. He already knew so well what men were. He shivered in his wet clothing.

"Are you afraid already? Think how brave you were just now. You must mind, not only the words, but the meaning of them."

"I will be strong and brave. I will be a man among men, a good man — doing good to men."

So saying, Johannes nerved himself, and with steadfast step entered the town.

Here things looked truly dismal. Water was spouting out of the gutters into the streets. Everything was glistening in the wet, and big streams of water were flowing down the tent canvases.

But the people were out on pleasure bent, and pleasure they would have. As the shop doors were opened one could see the red faces within, close to one another in the blue tobacco smoke, and could hear the uproar of loud singing and the stamping of feet.

Under the projecting canvas of the booths the crowds flocked together, slowly pushing one past the other into the bright light of the lamps. Johannes and his Guide pressed in among them to get out of the rain.

Johannes was fond of fairs. Always he was glad when the boats arrived in the canal with the timber for the various booths and play-tents; and he looked on eagerly while the flimsy structures — for that one week only — were being put together. This onlooking was an earnest of the strange and fantastic pleasures in store for him.

He liked the gay and merry pageantry, the foolish inscriptions on the merry-go-rounds, the mysterious places behind and between the tents, where the performers lodged; and above all, the tiny, out-of-the-way tents with their natural curiosities, and the strange animals, which seemed so sadly

out of place in this Dutch world, in their tedious, unvarying captivity, with the reveling crowd around them.

And every summer he found it just as hard to see the breaking up of this variegated medley.

Not that he ever had longed for the Fair when with Wind-kind, but, of all that he had experienced while among human beings, the Fair seemed to him the most delightful.

And now he was rejoiced at the familiar scene of the booths with their toys; the cakes, layered with rose-colored sugar and inscribed with white lettering; all the shining brass-work of the toy-pistol bazaars; the small tents in lonely places, where brown, smoked eels lay between brass-headed iron bars; the shooting-galleries; the noisy and showy merry-go-rounds.

Nor did he, for old remembrance' sake, mind the various odors and mal-odors; the smell of cake, of frying fat, and of smoking lamps; nor the strange, mysterious, stable and wild-beast scents that came out of the large exhibition tents.

The children were running about, as usual, with their red balloons — tooting upon trumpets, and twirling their rattles. The mothers had their skirts over their heads to keep off the rain. Now and then a train of young men and maidens — their caps and hoods askew, or back side before — danced their way through the crowds, with shining, rollicking faces, shouting as they went: "hi! ha! hi! ha!" Then they would calm down, and step one side to look again at the cakes and the knick-knacks.

As Johannes dearly loved a laugh, he stopped again and again where there was anything funny; at the Punch-and-Judy show, or the antics in front of the circus, of which the peasants are foolishly fond.

Thus, beside his companion, he stood looking, in the midst of a group of people holding open umbrellas. On all sides he saw staring faces, reddened by the light of the sputtering oil-torch in front of the tent. The people looked stupid, he thought, standing there staring, now and then all bursting

out together in a laugh when a clown cracked a joke. Painted on the canvas, in front of the tent, he saw ugly pictures of horrible battles between men and tigers — and everywhere, blood! From the balustrade, a monkey was watching the people very seriously. Ever and anon he darted a glance at a boy standing close by, to discover if he meant well or ill by his outstretched hand.

Behind the little table at the curtained entrance sat a buxom woman dressed in a black silk gown. Her face was round and broad, and her dark, glossy hair was smoothly plastered to her forehead. She was not ugly, but reminded Johannes of the wax dolls in front of the hair-dressers'.

Suddenly, Johannes heard the ring-master speaking to him; and the people turned their heads round and grinned at him.

"Come on, young gentleman," said the ring-master, "you must see the show, too! Ask your papa to let you see the show. There are pretty girls here, too — very nice for young gentlemen. Just look here, what pretty girls!"

Then he pointed to the buxom woman behind the table, who, laughing not a bit, but showing off her rings with their mock jewels, held up the curtain as an invitation to Johannes to enter. And then the ring-master pointed to a pale, slim girl, whose lank hair, light and silky, was combed straight down, and fell below her waist. She stood in front of the tent, dressed in a soiled white suit, spangled with silver. Her skirt was short, and her white tights did not fit well over her long, thin legs.

"Hello! Come on! Come on!" cried the girl, in a shrill, eager little voice, clapping her hands.

Ha! How suddenly Johannes' attention was riveted! He experienced a wonderfully strong feeling of tenderness and sympathy as he looked at that pale child. She wore a little silver crown on her hair, which was nearly ash-blonde, and her eyes, also, were light-grey or light-blue, he could not tell which.

"Would you like to go in?" asked his Guide.

Without looking up Johannes nodded his head. They pressed slowly through the people, and Johannes saw that the girl kept looking at him attentively, as if his coming mattered more to her than that of the others. What wonderful things entered his head in those few seconds, while pressing through the packed, ill-smelling crowd, on his way into the tent. He thought of his dead father—and about his own going, now, to an entertainment at a Fair. But, immediately, he thought, also, of the great change—his deliverance from Pluizer, and that he had not come to the Fair for his own pleasure, like an every-day schoolboy, but that he had now come among people in order to soothe their sorrows, and to make them good and happy. At the same time he felt a strong aversion to that rough, rude, and unsavory throng. And then he looked again at the pale girl who had called to him, and was waiting for him. She was a human being, too, and his whole heart went out to her. She looked so slight, so serious and intelligent. What a life she must have led! And what must she think and feel!

For an instant he forgot something; namely, whose hand it was he was holding. He had not yet let drop that dear hand, but was not thinking who it was that had been taken for his father, and was leading him into a circus.

"What is the price?" he heard his Guide ask the young woman, in his deep, serious voice.

But the pale little girl, who had continued all this time looking at him, cried out in an abrupt, decided tone: "It's Markus!"

The fat young woman just glanced in silence from the girl to the two visitors, and then struck the table with her plump, white, ring-covered hands, till the money-box jingled.

"Jerusalem! Is that you Vissie? Where did you swim from? And how did you find that kid? Nix to pay! Just step inside. Right here! First row. I'll see you again, presently, eh?"

Then she looked straight at Johannes with her black eyes.

He shrank from that cold, hard, scrutiny. But she laughed in a friendly way and said:

"How d' do, youngster?"

Johannes felt the perspiration start, from fright and confusion. That exalted being, whom he had seen treading the glowing waters of the sea, whose hand he still retained, to be spoken to in such a manner, by this insignificant creature — as if he were an old acquaintance! Had he utterly lost his senses? Had he been dreaming, and had he been walking with one or other of the Fair-goers?

Not until he had sat awhile, and his heart had ceased to beat so fast, did he venture to lift his eyes — which had taken in nothing of their surroundings — and look up at his Guide.

The latter had evidently been regarding him for a considerable time. The first glance sufficed. Johannes saw the selfsame pale face, the selfsame somewhat weary, but clear and steady eyes full of earnest ardor, trustful and begetting trust; bestowing, through their regard alone, rest and solace indescribable.

But he was an ordinary man — the same as the others. He had on a brown cap with the ear-flaps tied together over the top, and he wore an old faded cloak out of which the rain-water was still trickling down upon the seat. His shoes, mud-covered and water-soaked, stood squarely against each other on the wooden floor. His trousers were frayed out, and had lost all definite color.

Johannes wanted to speak to him, but his lips trembled so he could not utter a word, and tears coursed down his cheeks.

All this time they still sat hand in hand. Nothing had been said, but Johannes felt his hand being pressed, while a super-human assurance and encouragement, from out those kindly eyes, gradually penetrated to the depths of his being.

His Guide smiled, and indicated that he ought to give attention to the performance and to the spectators. Slowly,

with a long-drawn breath, Johannes turned his eyes thither; but he looked on listlessly and without interest.

And now and then — whenever he dared — he looked at his Guide; at his wet, shabby clothes; at his hands — not coarse — but oddly rough, and with a blackened thumb and forefinger; at his pale, patient face, with the hair clinging to the temples.

The boy's lips began to tremble again, his throat contracted, and irrepressible sobs accompanied the tears.

When he looked into the sanded ring around which the spectators sat, he saw a large white horse coming in. Upon him stood the pale, fair little girl. She had more color now, and looked much prettier and more graceful. She sprang and knelt upon the big white horse while she enlivened him with her shrill cries.

It was not merely sympathy and tenderness that moved Johannes now, but something more of admiration and respect; for she seemed no older than himself, and yet she was not in the least timid, but understood her art well. The people clapped loudly, and then she put her slender, delicate hands one by one to her lips, waving them first to the left, then to the right, with self-possessed grace.

The clown made her a low bow with all kinds of foolish grimaces, and indicated the greatest respect; and she rewarded him with a studied smile, like a princess. Johannes could not take his eyes away from her.

"Who is that little girl?" he asked his Guide. "Is she really so lovely?"

"Her name is Marjon," said his Guide, "and she is a dear, good child, but too weak for her task."

"I wish I could do something for her," said Johannes.

"That is a good boy. We will go to her, presently."

Johannes did not pay much more attention to the exhibition. His mind was full of the prospective interview with the little

actress. The world in which she lived was charming. And she herself seemed, at this moment, the one above all others he most wished to help and benefit.

After the spectators were gone he went with his Guide between the curtains from behind which the horses had come. In the dimly lighted space where a single lamp was burning, and close to where the breathing and stamping of the horses could be heard, Johannes saw her sitting. She was stooping down to a chest on the top of which were some plates of food, and she still had on her pretty costume. There was no one with her.

"Good day, Markus," said she, extending her hand to Johannes' Guide. "Who is the little boy?"

"This is Johannes. He wishes to make your acquaintance, and to do something good for you."

"Is that so?" laughed the girl. "Then he might just change my silver quarters into gold."

Johannes did not know what to say, and was more perplexed than he remembered ever in his life to have been before. But Marjon looked at him with her large, light, grey eyes, and nodded kindly.

"Come, little boy, don't be so bashful. Won't you have something to eat? Quick! Before my sister comes! But you ought to stay with us. We are going to Delft this week. Are you going with us, Markus?"

"It may be," said Markus. "Now, we are only going to try to find a place to sleep in. Johannes can hardly feel hungry. Do you, Johannes?"

Johannes shook his head.

"He has had a great sorrow, Marjon; his father has just died."

Marjon looked at him again, gently and good-naturedly, and then gave him her hand, with the very same, quick gesture of confidence a monkey employs when he recognizes his master.

"Good-by, till morning," she said, as the two passed out of the rear door of the tent.

Outside, the moon was shining, and, since the rain had stopped, the Fair-people had become still more jolly and noisy.

Well, well! How ugly they were! How clumsily they danced, and how badly they sang! The men and women were now standing in circles, their arms interlocked, with one another's hoods and caps on, ready to spring into the street, and to shriek out, in their harsh voices, songs without sense or tune. All their faces were wanton, vacant, or downright dissipated, and most of them were flushed with excitement or with drink.

Johannes saw mothers, too, with infants in their arms, and leading little children by the hand, coming out of the fritter-stalls, dragging themselves along through the crowds. The tavern doors flew open, and the rude Fair-goers bounced outside. Here and there, on the street corners, a fierce quarrel was in progress, with a close ring of onlookers gathered around. Nothing more that was pretty, or nice, or pleasing, was in sight. Everywhere there was raving and ranting and bawling; with a thousand dissonant noises, and a wretched stench.

The only exception was a squad of six soldiers, passing calmly and quietly, with regulated step, through the throng, in single file. It was the patrol. Johannes knew it, and it gave him a feeling of rest and contentment, as if there was something else in human beings save rudeness and debauchery; that a little self-restraint and worthiness still remained.

Up above — beyond that petty tumult — beyond that ruddy flaming and flickering, the moon was shining, silver-white and stately. Johannes looked up longingly.

He found his task an awful one, and the people worse than he had expected. But of one little being he thought with tenderness; and in her case he would persevere.

"Let us go to sleep," he begged.

"Very well," said his Guide, opening a tavern door.

It was oppressive there, and reeking with the fumes of gin

and tobacco. They pressed their way through the crowd and went up to the bar.

"Have you lodgings for us, Vrouw Schimmel?" asked Johannes' Guide.

"Lodgings? Well, seeing it's you, Markus. But otherwise not! See? Go now — the two of you!"

They crept up to a small dark garret, and there received a couple of mattresses which the maid had dragged upstairs; and then they could lie down.

Johannes lay awake through the clamor and jingling and the stamping of the Fair-goers downstairs until long after the morning light had broken. The day just passed — long as a year, and full of great and weighty matters — was thought over from beginning to end. Serene, open-eyed — quietly, not restlessly, he lay there meditating till morning dawned, and the sunlight, like a red-gold stain, touched the wall above him, and till the din downstairs had subsided and died away. Then he fell asleep, thinking of Marjon — her bright eyes and silver crown.

II

HE was awakened by jovial sounds. There was something hopeful and powerful about and within him when he opened his eyes again, and looked around the close, dark little garret. A column of sunbeams stood slanting from the floor to the little dormer window, and motes were glistening in the light.

Both out-of-doors, and below him, Johannes heard the women singing, and busily, merrily talking — the way women do mornings as they hurry with their kitchen and door-yard tasks. The rubbish of the day before was thrust aside, and everything was in readiness for a new Fair day.

Beside him lay his Guide, still calmly sleeping. He had removed nothing but his coat with which he had covered himself, and his shoes which were standing beside the mattress. He was in a profound sleep — his head upon his rolled-up mantle. His curling hair was now dry, and looked dark and glossy, and his cheeks bore a little more color. Johannes gazed attentively at his right hand hanging down from under his coat, over the mattress to the floor. It was a slender, shapely hand, with short-cut nails, but the blackening which Johannes had seen the day before was still there. That stamp of toil could not be washed away.

Johannes slipped quietly downstairs and went to wash himself at the pump in the courtyard. About him all was cheerful activity — scrubbing and scouring, washing and rinsing. The summer morning was warm and yet fresh. It was a clear and sober world with nothing dreamy or fanciful about it.

The bar-woman poured him out a cup of coffee, and asked in a familiar way if his roommate was still sleeping, and how Johannes had met him.

"Oh, just by chance!" answered Johannes, blushing deeply;

not only because he was fibbing, but because it was to himself such a delicate and obscure matter, and of such supreme importance.

"Who is he, really?" he asked, with a feeling of committing treason.

"Who is he!" re-echoed the mistress, in such a loud voice and with such emphasis that the other women stopped their work and looked up. "Did you hear him? He asks who Markus is!"

"Do you mean Markus Vis?" asked a slatternly work-girl.

"Yes, that's who he means!" said the bar-woman.

The women looked at one another, and then went on again with their splashing and scrubbing.

"I do not know anything *yet*," said Johannes, a little more boldly.

"Neither do we," said the slovenly girl. "Do you, Bet?"

"I know that he is a darn good fellow," answered Bet.

"They do say, though, that he is not good," said another work-woman.

"True, he *may* not be good — but good he *is*, I say," retorted Bet.

This sounded a bit obscure, but Johannes understood it perfectly well.

"He has more sense than all four of you put together," said the bar-woman, indignantly. "I have seen, with my own eyes, how the little daughter of Sannes, the Plumber, who had been given up by as many as four doctors because there was not a ghost of a chance for her, — how she was taken by Markus on his lap, when all the phlegm came loose; and only yesterday, I saw her with her mother, running in front of the booths."

"And the other day," said the slatternly girl, "when that tall Knelis at the vegetable market was drunk again — you know that common brawler with the white flap on his cap — well, he just took him gently by the wing, home to his old

woman; and the fellow went along, as meek as a booby tied to his mother's apron-string."

In this way, one story suggested another, and Johannes soon learned how much his Guide was liked and esteemed among performers, showmen, workmen, day-laborers — yes, even by the shopkeepers and tavern-keepers, although he was a poor customer.

"What does he really do?" asked Johannes.

"Don't you know that?" replied the mistress, astonished. "And yet I thought you were going to be his apprentice. He is a scissors-grinder. His cart stands here, in the shed."

Johannes felt his heart thumping again, for he heard coming the very one of whom they were speaking. He scarcely dared to look at him. But the woman exclaimed: "Good morning, Markus! That's a sly-boots of yours — he doesn't even know what your work is!"

Quite in his accustomed way Markus said: "Good morning, all! Is there a bowl of coffee for me, too? Well, there is time enough yet to understand about that. One may learn fast enough, turning the wheel."

"Will he have to turn?" asked the woman. "Then have you no footboard?"

Markus set his coffee down among the clean drinking-glasses, on a little table, and sat down beside it, while the maid was cutting the slices of bread.

Then Johannes and he regarded each other with a look full of complete, mutual understanding. In his earnest, musical voice Markus had spoken lightly, and easily, without conveying to the others any particular meaning. But that they listened eagerly was apparent. Whenever his voice was heard, others usually stopped speaking; and the least thing he said, in jest or in earnest, was listened to with respectful attention.

"Yes, you see," said Markus, "I still have a cart with a footboard. But nowadays there are much finer ones with

window-glass upon them, and a big wheel which another has to turn."

"Gracious!" said the bar-mistress, "so you're getting up in the world, Markus! Sure, you've had a legacy, or a lucky lottery ticket."

"No, Vrouw Schimmel, but I thought this; your standing is good, of late, and as you have to go to the banker's now, with your money, you might loan me, say, a hundred and fifty guildens, and I'll repay the loan at the rate of a gulden a week. How will that do?"

The woman stopped working and laughed. The mistress laughed, too, and cried: "You're a regular Jew!" and, after having sauntered back and forth a while, she said:

"All right — begin now and here! Sharpen these knives, and mind you make them sharp as razors!"

After Markus and Johannes had eaten their bread, the old cart was dragged out of the shed and dusted off, the axles oiled, the rope moistened, and the knives were sharpened. Johannes watched attentively, and saw how swiftly and skilfully Markus turned and directed the steel until it was sharp and bright, and how the golden fountain of sparks flew over the whizzing wheel.

Afterward they went together up the street, for it was necessary to earn some money.

Markus stepped slowly, wheeling his cart through the sunny streets — alive with people. From time to time his "Scissors to Gri-i-i-nd!" rang out above the tramp of feet and the rattle of wagons, while he looked searchingly right and left to see if there was not some one who had something to be sharpened. Johannes ran ahead, to ring the bells of all the houses, and to bring the knives and scissors out to the cart.

Johannes did his very best. He felt that only now had life begun in real earnest. For one's bread one must work, and earn money. He had never yet thought about money and

money-making; but the reality was stern and sobering. Every one around him talked about money and money-getting. Yet his noble Guide, he saw, was poor and shabby — forced to hard and constant labor to keep from starving. Life grew serious indeed.

They said but little to each other. They were too busy. Johannes enjoyed the work. He felt there was something heroic and important in the fact that he, the young gentleman who had been to a superior school here, was now going around as a scissors-grinder's boy. And when the housemaids, somewhat surprised, looked at his neat little suit, he carried it more jauntily. But the meeting with an old schoolmate was full of pain.

Toward twelve o'clock he grew tired and hungry. In passing by the bakeries he had a feeling now that he had never known before — almost peevishness — as if something had been taken away from him — as if that bread were his by very right.

Then they came to the circus, where Marjon was. And there she sat, with her dark-eyed sister. Her flaxen hair was now braided and wound around her head.

Johannes heard the sound of an iron kettle being shaken, and he knew that that meant potatoes. And there was bacon, also, and some boiled vegetables. At first, these things were of prime importance to him. He could think of nothing else until he had eaten — ravenously. Then, rather ashamed, he glanced up.

They were sitting out-of-doors, in the rear of the tents and the booths, with an awning stretched out over their heads to protect them from the sun, which was shining fiercely and brightly. Close by stood the circus-wagon — painted green, with variegated red and white trimmings. A canary's cage stood upon the platform, between flower-pots, and the yellow bird was singing merrily.

Johannes thought it fine and good now to be among people. There sat the bright little being with the pale face, the large

grey eyes, and the ash-blond hair — braided and wound like a diadem about her head. It seemed to Johannes as if a brilliant light streamed out from her; a light which tasted sweet, and smelled sweet also. And could she not ride a horse, and spring through hoops, and with those slender hands throw plates up high, and catch and balance them? And she looked often at Johannes, and seemed to find him a nice little boy.

Beside her, calm and serious, his head bent forward, his dark hair curling in his neck, sat Markus, eating. This made him seem to Johannes still more dear and intimate.

Next, sat Marjon's sister. Johannes felt a little uneasy in her presence. She sat close by him, and ate very audibly. She shoveled food upon Johannes' plate, and now and then patted him on the shoulder, to encourage him to eat. Then she looked at him, kindly enough, but with a cold penetration as if with some fixed purpose. Her eyes seemed almost black, and her glossy hair was as black as ebony. But her skin was waxy white. Whenever she stirred, something in her clothing always creaked, and there was a heavy odor of perfumery about her.

Beyond Marjon sat the little monkey, watching the movements of the steel forks with his sharp, earnest eyes. Occasionally Marjon spoke to him, and then he whined in eager expectation of something to eat.

That quarter of an hour was delightful! Johannes looked repeatedly at Marjon, trying to think who she looked like, and why it seemed as if he must have known her a long time. And he found it pleasant and adorable when she spoke to him, and was as confidential as if with a friend. Yes, he remembered something of that old sensation with Windekind — the feeling of friendship and intimacy. But he could well see that she did not resemble Windekind. He noticed that her nails were not very clean, and admitted that she did make use of coarse and profane language. Yet her speech was not flat, but musical — with a foreign accent; and her bearing was nearly

always winsome, although she did things considered bad manners — things never permitted him.

The afternoon which now followed, filled with the same sort of work — continually running back and forth across the sunny streets — seemed hard indeed. At last he could not think any more, and his feet burned fiercely. Sad and perplexed he sat down on a stone stoop as the shadows grew deeper and cooler, and thought of the gloomy garret where he was again to sleep.

"Come, Johannes." The day's money is nearly earned, and then we go to Vrouw Schimmel's for our supper."

"How much have we earned?" asked Johannes; expecting to hear, to his consolation, of the riches which he had procured by his hard work.

"Two guldens, forty-seven cents," said Markus.

"Is that enough?"

"So long as we can sleep for nothing at Vrouw Schimmel's and can eat for nothing at the circus. But we cannot do that every day."

Johannes felt greatly discouraged. Already so tired, and so little accomplished! Not enough earned yet for one day's support! How would he ever have enough strength left over to help the people? With his head in his hands he sat staring vacantly at the pavement.

"Tired?" asked Markus, gently. Johannes nodded. Markus spoke again:

"But remember, my boy! This is your first day. It will be easier after you get used to it."

Johannes lifted his weary, disheartened eyes, and looked at his Guide who was patiently engaged in putting something about the cart-axle to rights.

"It is not *your* first day, though, Markus, is it? It can never be any easier for *you*. And that ought not to be so. It will never do."

A strange bitterness of thought took possession of Johannes — as if everything were full of fraud and foolishness — as

if he himself were made a fool of. What sort of fellow was that, with the long hair, the silly old cap, and frayed-out trousers, who sat there, pottering?

Markus glanced round and looked at him. Immediately Johannes grew ashamed of his thoughts and felt a deep, overmastering sorrow and sympathy, that He — He who was standing there before him, was obliged to toil so — in poverty and squalor.

This time he burst into unrestrained sobs, he was both so tired and so over-excited. Weeping, he could only utter, "Why is it? I cannot understand. It will never — never! —"

Markus did not attempt to console him; he merely said gently but firmly that he must wheel the cart and go home, for people were observing them.

Johannes went early to bed, and his Guide went with him. The din from below came up to them, as before, and the moon shone brightly into the little garret. The two friends lay upon their hard mattresses, hand in hand, talking together in an undertone. They did not use the careless commonplaces of every-day speech, but they spoke as Johannes had done with Windekind; — in the old, serious way.

"When I look at you, my brother, what is it makes me feel so sad?" asked Johannes. When I see your shabby clothes and blackened hands; when I hear you addressed as comrade by those poor and filthy people; when I see you sharing their hard, unlovely life, then I cannot keep from crying. I am sorry I gave way to my feelings, and attracted attention, but then it is so dreadful!"

"It is dreadful, Johannes, not on my account, but because of the necessity for it."

"How can there be any need of your being so plain and sad? Is there anything good in plainness and sadness?"

"No, Johannes; plainness and sadness are evils. The beautiful and the joyful only are good, and it is they we must seek."

"But, dear brother, you may be both beautiful and joyful.

Indeed, what is there you cannot be? I saw you walking upon the shining waters. That surely was no illusion?"

"No, that was no illusion."

"I saw only your face — not your clothing; only your face, and that was beautiful and noble. And if you can walk upon the sea, then you can, if you wish to, be beautiful and grand and joyful, even among those ugly people."

"Yes, I can do that also, Johannes, but I will not do it, because I love those plain and sorrowful people. I will do much more, just because so much power has been given me. I will be a brother to them, so that they may learn to know me."

"Must you, for that reason, be low in station and be sorrowful?"

"I am not of low degree, nor am I sorrowful. My spirits are high and my heart is glad: and because I am so strong I can stoop to those who are lowly and sad, in order that they may attain me, and with me, the Light."

In the dark — eyes shut close — Johannes nodded his satisfaction, and then fell asleep, his hand still in that of his friend.

III

At the end of the week, the bell rang from noon until one o'clock, to announce the closing of the Fair. The tent canvases remained fastened down, and the performances were hurriedly broken off. The stakes and boards were loaded upon the boats lying in the canal; and there the wooden lions of the merry-go-rounds made a sorry figure. They bore no resemblance whatever to the lively, furious lions of the day before; and one could hardly tell what had become of all that motley and magnificent array.

The real, living lions, and the people, in their different vehicles, went up the street, in a long caravan, to the next town where the Fair was to begin anew; for the summer is one long Fair for the Fair-folk.

Days before, Johannes and Markus had passed through that same street; for with their heavy cart, they would have been unable to keep up with the more rapid, horse-drawn vehicles. The weather remained fine and clear. The walks along the road from village to village, with the excitement of finding work and earning money — the restings on the sunny, grassy wayside — the baths in retired spots — and now and then coffee in the kitchens of the farmhouses — all this was new, pleasant, and stimulating, and Johannes grew light-hearted and merry again.

Close by the next town the circus overtook them. It was only a mite of a company. The big white horse was drawing the green wagon, and two black-and-white spotted horses were drawing the second one. The ring-master walked beside it, swearing now, not joking, and wearing a very sour face. Then came a couple of men and some loose horses, in the rear.

Johannes lay in the grass on the lookout for Marjon. There she came, in her hand a big branch of alder leaves, with

which she was brushing away the flies from the white horse.

She was walking on dreamily, with only an indifferent look at the staring peasant children along the way. But when she saw Johannes, her eyes grew big and bright, and she waved her branch at him.

He sprang up and ran to her, and she struck at him playfully with her alder branch. Then, with a sudden charming movement, she gave him a kiss. Johannes kissed her bashfully in return. The peasant children were astonished, but circus folk are always queer!

From between the muslin curtains of the little window in the green wagon, Johannes saw two jet-black eyes peeping at him. They were the eyes of Marjon's sister, and they wore a strange smile.

Johannes and Marjon walked on, hand in hand, chatting busily about the experiences of the past few days. And while Marjon told of her performances — how she had learned her tricks, and how often, too, she had fallen — he listened as deferentially as if he were being initiated into the mysteries of a princely court or of the national government.

Walking thus hand in hand beside the white horse, they approached the town. By the wayside, with projecting tea-arbors, and well-planned gardens, stood those low, wide country-seats which are still to be seen in the neighborhood of the towns of Holland. They bear such names as "Rustoord,"* or "Nooit-gedacht,"* and make one think of ancient times when the burghers went out to walk, with their Gouda* pipes, and when the fragrant violets still grew upon the ramparts.

Between the windows of these houses, fastened to a curved iron rod, are little mirrors, in which the inmates, seated by the window, are able to see any one standing on the stoop, or approaching from a distance. They are called "spionnetjes." The passer-by sees in this glass only the face of the indweller.

* See note, page 520.

In one of these little spyglasses Johannes suddenly saw a face that startled him. Yet it was not a frightful countenance. It was pale and spectacled, with two stiff "puffs" on each side. A lace cap crowned the whole, with lavender ribbons falling over the ears down to the shoulders. Two very clear, kindly, serious eyes were looking straight at him. Johannes was startled, because he knew the face so well. It was that of his aunt.

There was no doubt about it — it was Aunt Seréna. She had often been to visit at his home, and now Johannes remembered the house where she lived. He had even spent the night there. He cast a shy glance toward it. Yes, to be sure! That was the one-story, white stucco house, with the low windows, and the glass doors opening on the garden. He remembered the garden, with the splendid beech-trees. Between the house and the road was a green ditch, and on the fancy iron railing was the name "Vrede-best." He recalled it all very well now, and it made him uneasy and anxious.

"What makes you so white, Jo?" asked Marjon. "Aren't you well?"

"An aunt of mine lives there," said Johannes, blushing deeply now.

"Did she see you?" asked Marjon, quickly perceiving the significance of the event.

"She surely did."

"Don't look round," said Marjon. "Cut around the corner! Can she do anything to you?"

Johannes had not thought about that, at all. He owned to himself, that while his Aunt Seréna was looking at him, he felt ashamed of being seen with the circus-wagon, but he said nothing, and grasped Marjon's hand again, for he had let it drop.

Fortunately Markus did not tell him to ask if there was anything at "Vrede-best" to be sharpened.

But that pale face, with the puffs, the spectacles, the clear eyes, as seen in the little mirror, continued to follow Johannes in a very disconcerting way. The reflector was double, and

Johannes felt certain that his aunt now sat before the other side, and that the fixed eyes were watching him.

"Have you any aunts, Marjon?"

"How do I know? Maybe," laughed Marjon.

"Your father, then? — Is he dead?"

Marjon lowered her voice a little, and, in a more serious manner, began a confidential explanation of an important matter: "I do not know, Jo. My mother is dead. She was a lion-tamer, and met with an accident. She is buried in Keulen; but my father was rich, and he may be living still. So you see I may have aunts — a lot of them — rich ones, perhaps."

"Have you never seen your father?" asked Johannes, speaking softly himself, now.

"No, never! But Lorum says" (Lorum was the ring-master) "that he was a count and had a castle."

"I can well believe that," said Johannes, looking at her admiringly.

"Yes, but Lorum tells lies."

That cast a shadow over Johannes' beautiful imaginings. Later, he often had occasion to experience the untruthfulness of Lorum.

It was a hot noon-time when they entered the town. Those afoot were tired and irritable, and the customary visit to the municipal authorities concerning positions was attended with no little quarreling and swearing. The empty, darkened parlors of the stately houses looked cool and alluringly tranquil. Bright housemaids came to the doors to see the circus-troup go by, and they chatted and giggled with one another.

Outside the town a large, grass-grown place was pointed out, where the dwelling-wagons might stand. So they were all in a circle — twenty or more of them — from the big, two-horsed leading wagons, freshly painted, with dainty curtains, flower-pots, gilded decorations, bird-cages and carvings, to the rickety, home-made wagons, constructed of old boards,

patched up with bits of canvas and sheet-iron, and drawn by a man and a dog.

And now the steaming dust-covered horses were unharnessed, the hay and straw — which had been pilfered or begged — spread out, fires were started, and preparations made for a hasty meal. It was a lively, bustling camp. Markus was there, too. His new scissors-cart with its window-glass stood beside Marjon's wagon glittering in the sunshine. He was thoughtfully walking around among the people with Johannes, exchanging greetings with everybody, and carrying on brief conversations. His raincoat and cap were packed away, but his coat and trousers were the same, for he had no others. He had on now a very broad-brimmed straw hat, such as can be purchased at the Fairs for two stuivers. Johannes much preferred to see him in this, and was pleased to note how the hat became his long, dark hair.

Wherever Markus came, things went better. Disputes filled the air, and shocking language was to be heard on every side, even from the lips of the children. But when Markus appeared they calmed down, and threats and quarrels were soon exorcised. Not having been seen in a long while, he was greeted with hearty exclamations of surprise, and with all sorts of questions which he answered jestingly.

"Hello, Vis! What have you been doing with yourself? Have you been under water?"

"At court, Dirk Volders. See what a fine present I have brought away." And he pointed out the new cart.

"Surely, you've been sharpening the coupon-scissors again, haven't you?"

"No, the nail-scissors, Dirk, and it's time to do it here."

Wherever Markus went, a troop of children followed him. Without apparent reason, or any expectation of delicacies, always several children tagged untiringly after him, an hour at a time, clinging fast, with their dirty little hands, to a shred of his coat or a fold of his trousers. With earnest faces they listened to his words and watched his movements, quietly

managing the while to usurp one another's place at the front. Whoever could catch hold of his coat held on. Wherever he went, the ragged, unwashed little ones, from under wagons and behind boxes, put in an appearance — trotting after, so as to be on hand. There was always a chance of his suddenly throwing himself down and telling a story to a dozen dirty little listeners. Their small mouths, all smeared and stained, were wide open with interest, and their hands, furnished with a bread-crust or an old doll, hung down motionless, as they listened in suspense. And no one had ever surprised Markus in a peevish or impatient word to his troublesome little admirers. Not one of the surly, scolding parents had ever been able to admit to a child that it was naughty enough for Markus, even, to send it away.

Johannes observed this with great admiration. At first it seemed to him wonderful — supernatural. A whimpering, naughty child became submissive, a troublesome one tractable, and rude, unmannerly, and passionate children went away composed and quiet. And how could any one remain patient under such a continual din, and tagged after by the dirtiest and the worst-behaved children in the world? But, listening and keenly scrutinizing, Johannes gradually came to understand the apparently incomprehensible. It was the power of the interest in them which performed the miracle. There was nothing concerning those neglected little waifs in which Markus did not evidence the keenest interest, and he gave it his fullest attention — sparing no trouble nor exertion. Thus the roving mind of the child was at the same time pacified and restrained, and reduced to a state favorable for guidance. But, however he himself might explain it, the parents who were unable to control their children maintained that Markus had something in his eyes, or in his fingers — a “magic,” they called it — by which he ruled the children. And these convictions grew still more settled through the knowledge of the willing and blessed help he gave to the sick.

There prevailed among these people a great distrust of

physicians, and the one grievance they had against Markus was that he too often (according to their views) referred the sick to the doctor and the hospital. "He can do it better himself," they thought. "He surely is afraid of getting into jail." Yet they begrudged the police the satisfaction of seeing him there. But they tried to induce Markus to help them in every illness — even that of a broken bone — without their having recourse to doctor or hospital. In cases where the sick body could do without the relief of costly attendance and technical apparatus, Markus did not refuse to help with his simple expedients. It was said that he was a healer, yet no one had ever seen or heard him pray beside a sick person. He sometimes sat for a long time, deep in thought, by the side of a sufferer who was restless, or in pain. He would lay his hand upon the head, or the affected part, or take the hand of the patient. This he would sometimes do hour after hour, and he seldom left without having reduced the pain and restlessness.

Johannes had already heard this related by Marjon, and now he also saw mothers bringing their crying infants to him for advice, and he gave eager attention to what Markus would say.

A baby screamed and wriggled like a worm, resisting vehemently, for it dreaded the light, and wanted to hide its affected eyes in the mother's arms. But Markus insisted on examining the poor little eyes. They were all stuck together with foulness, and were red and swollen.

Johannes expected nothing else than that Markus would anoint them and command them to open. But Markus said:

"That's a loathsome lot of stuff, mother. There is a good eye-clinic in Leyden. But there is also a good one here. Go to it soon — now — to-day."

The mother, a strong, bony woman, looked at him through her straggling hair, in an irresolute, dissatisfied way.

"Curse 'em — those quacks! You do it instead. You can do it just as well."

"I'll not do it, mother, positively. And think of it! If you do not go quickly, your child will surely be stark blind. Go! It is your duty to."

"How is it, Markus? Can't you do it, or don't you dare to, that you send me off to those murderers?"

Markus regarded her several moments, and then said, gently: "Mother, it is your own fault—you know it very well. I may not give you help, but it is not on account of the police. There in the town they will give you good advice. But go now, quickly, or the blindness of your child will be upon your conscience."

With a sullen look the woman turned away, and Johannes asked in a whisper: "Are these doctors more clever than Markus?"

"They know enough for this," said Markus, abruptly.

IV

IN the heat of the afternoon the Fair-folk went to sleep. They lay snoring everywhere — on straw or heaps of rags, in ugly, ungainly postures. But the children continued in motion, and often here and there the sound of their teasing and crying could be heard.

Johannes strolled around dejectedly. To go and lie calmly down, to sleep between those vile men, as Markus did, was impossible. Rank odors pervaded everything, and he was afraid, too, of vermin. Should he go walk in the town park, or between the sunny polders? Although he was ashamed to run away, he could not remain in peace. Again that frightful feeling arose, of unfitness for his great task. He was too weak — too sensitive.

He thought, with a painful longing, of the cool, stately, and peaceful parlors in the houses of the town, with furniture neatly dusted by tidy maids. He thought, too, of Aunt Seréna and her pretty, old-fashioned house, and of her large, shady garden, where surely the raspberries were now ripe.

Strolling moodily along, he came upon the green wagon, and behold, there was Marjon, lying in peaceful sleep. She lay on a shaggy, red-and-yellow horse-blanket, and her lean arms and scrawny neck were bare. She was so still — her knees drawn up and her cheek in her hand — that one could not tell whether she was really sleeping, or lying awake with closed eyes.

The monkey sat close beside her in the hot sun, contentedly playing with a cocoanut.

Johannes felt touched, and went to sit down against the wheel of the wagon. Looking intently at the dear little girl, he thought over her troubled, wandering life.

In thinking of that he forgot his own grief; and from the depths of his discontent he passed over to a mood of tender melancholy full of compassion. And then there awakened in

him words which he was careful to remember. He thought of a butterfly that he had once seen flying seaward over the strand; and thinking of Marjon he said to himself:

“Out to the sea a white butterfly passed —
It looked at the sunshine, not at the shore;
Now it must flutter in every blast,
And may rest never more.”

As he repeated those last words he was greatly moved, and tears coursed down his cheeks. He repeated the lines, over and over, adding new ones to them, and ended by losing himself wholly in this sweet play.

Thus the summer afternoon sped quickly, and Johannes went to the wagon for pencil and paper, to write down the thoughts which had come into his head. He was afraid they might escape.

“What are you doing?” asked Marjon, waking up. “Are you sketching me?”

“I am making verses,” said Johannes.

Marjon had to see the verses, and when she had read them she wanted to sing them. Taking from the wagon a zither, she began to hum softly, while trying to find the chords. Johannes waited in suspense.

At last Marjon found a sad yet fervent melody, that sounded to Johannes like one well known to him of old; and together they sang the song:

“Out to the sea a white butterfly passed —
It looked at the sun, but at the shore, never;
Now it must flutter in every blast,
Nor may rest, ever.

“Oh, butterfly, little butterfly,
Seeking everywhere for your valley fair,
Never, ah, never again will you spy
The shady dell, where sweet flow’rs dwell.

“By wild winds driven out to sea,
Floating on sunshine far from the shore,
Evermore she a-wing now must be,
And can rest, never.

“Oh, butterfly, lovely butterfly!
Through sunny blue, or shadowy grey,
Never again shall you descry
That leafy dell where the roses dwell.”

The children sang it once, twice, three times through; for those who had been awakened listened and asked for a repetition. Like a sudden illumination of sense and soul there came to Johannes the consciousness of having done something good. The poor, vile, neglected people — adults and children — had listened. He had made it, and it had given him happiness; now it seemed also to afford these sorrowful people some pleasure. This made him glad. It was not much, but then he could do something.

Night came; the air grew cooler, a fresh wind blew in from the sea over the grassy polders, and a rosy mist hung over the dunes. The broad canal along which the camp lay was sparkling in the sunset light. Everywhere noises awoke, and from the town came the twilight sounds of hand-organs and the rattling of carts.

The Fair-people formed a ring, and, eager for more music, besought Markus to play for them.

Markus took a harmonica, and played all kinds of tunes. Men and women, squatting down, or prone upon the ground, chin in hand, listened with great earnestness; and when the children, talking or loitering, and paying no attention to the music, came up to their parents, they were impatiently sent off.

When Markus stopped, a man cried out in a husky voice: “Come, boys, let’s sing something — The Song of the Poor Customers.”

Instantly, they all fell in obediently — Markus striking the key-note — and sang the following song:

THE QUEST

“ We coatless wand’rers without land, —
We are poor customers.
He who more dollars has than wits, —
’Tis he may loll around.
Tho’ high we jump, or low we jump
We’re bound to lose the game.
With empty stomachs we must dance, —
Our Ruler is the dollar.

“ In olden times the King was boss,
To rack us for our sins ;
But now he’s only a figure-head,
And has his own boss found.
Whoever crown, or scepter bears,
And gorgeous raiment wears, —
Tho’ he jump high, or jump less high,
He’s ruled by the dollar.

“ Before his men the General stands
And tells ’em how to kill.
The dapper heroes — one and all —
Make haste to do his will.
Yet, in his ’broidered uniform,
The dickens ! what commands he ?
Tho’ he jump high or jump less high
Th’ Commander is — The Dollar.

“ Where lies our land ? where spreads our roof ? —
We live by favor, only.
To them who have but pelf in pocket
We show our arts and tricks.
But if at last we come to grief
There yet is something for us, —
The fill of our mouths, a tasteful cover,
And a nook that’s all our own.

When the last word of the song had died away, the husky voice cried: "You might as well say, while you are about it, that the churchyards are emptied out every tenth year."

"Every twentieth!" cried another.

"Children," said Markus, setting his instrument upon the ground between his feet, "children, now listen to me. We have been singing of money, and of those who had more money than sense; but have you more sense than money? What is it you have that is better than either?"

"Only give me the money," cried the husky voice.

"And me!" cried the other.

"I would sooner give money to the monkey, who would throw it into the water, and not get tipsy with it," said Markus.

"Children," he continued, and gradually Johannes heard that deep ring in his voice, which riveted attention and caused an inner thrill, "where there is gold without sense, there will be misery; and where there is sense, there will be prosperity. For wisdom will not lack for gold.

"You truly are poor wretches — ill-treated and deceived.

"But nobody receives what is not his due. So do not rage and curse about it.

"He who is wise is strong, and cannot be ill-treated. The wise one cannot be deceived. The wise one is good, and neither steals nor lets himself be stolen from.

"You are weak and foolish; therefore you are deceived.

"But you cannot help it, poor children. I know it well; for the children suffer because of what parents and grandparents have done.

"But yet nobody receives what he does not deserve.

"We suffer for our parents and grandparents. Do not call that unjust. The wise ones love their parents, and will redeem their wrong-doing.

"And we can all make amends for what our parents did amiss. Yes, we can make amends to our parents — even now that they are dead.

"The grave is not a snare, children, for catching soul-

birds. Father and mother are living still, and are benefited through our efforts.

"Make your little ones good, then, for you will have need of them. Yes, those who die like the dumb beasts — like the harlots and drunkards — even they will find good children most needful.

"And no one can complain who fails of the expiation of the good children, nor is there any one who with their help cannot grow wiser.

"If two travelers, wandering at night in the cold — the one having wood, the other matches — do not understand each other, both will suffer and be lost in the dark.

"And if two shipwrecked people have between them a single cocoanut, and one takes the milk and the other the meat, then they both will perish — one from hunger, the other from thirst.

"So, also, with wisdom; and no one lives upon the earth who can be wise alone."

Markus' voice rang loud and clear, and it was as still as death in the sultry field, among those ragged people. For a time he was silent, and Johannes was so moved he was softly weeping; although he by no means accurately understood the meaning of the discourse.

Finally, the husky voice sounded again, but now more gently:

"I'll be darned if I can make head or tail of it; but I take it for truth."

"Children," said Markus, "you are not bound to understand, and you are not bound to believe me; but will you, for my sake, remember it, word for word, and teach it to your children? Then I will be grateful to you."

Softly rang the voices here and there: "Yes — yes, indeed!"

"Will you not play some more?" asked a young girl with large, dark eyes.

"Yes, I will play, and then you can dance," said Markus, nodding kindly.

Then he took a violin from one of the musicians and began

to play for the dancing — such fine music that the promenaders upon the street along the canal stood still, and remained to listen. A magistrate, who often played piano and violin duets with his friend the notary, remarked that there must be a veritable Zigeuner among the Fair-folk, since he only could play in such a manner.

Then, forming a large circle, the people began to dance. The men, holding the maidens with stiff right arms under the armpits, whirled them around in an awkward, woodeny way. They kept it up until the perspiration streamed from their red, earnest faces. The children and their parents sat around. Occasionally, also, songs were sung. There was a good deal of laughing, and they all enjoyed themselves greatly.

In the midst of their jollity, two breathless children came running in. The larger was a little girl of eight years, with a dirty little cherub-face, haloed with flaxen ringlets. She had on an old pair of boy's trousers, held up by suspenders, and falling quite down to her little bare feet, so that in running so fast she nearly tripped in them. "The cops!" cried the child, panting, and the little one cried after her: "The cops!"

Johannes scarcely comprehended the full import of this word; but it had the effect upon the group which the appearance of a hawk in the upper air has upon a flock of tomtits, or of sparrows.

The presence of one or two watchmen, or policemen, on the road in front of the camp was nothing unusual; but now they were coming in greater numbers, and conducted by a dignified official in a black coat, and with a walking-stick and eye-glasses — the mayor, perchance! With that heroic tread which indicates an exalted sense of duty he led his men upon the scene. The music and noisy demonstrations were struck dumb, the dancing stopped, and everybody looked toward the road whence the common danger menaced. Each asked himself who most probably would be the victim; or considered the possibility of a harmless retreat from the neighborhood.

Johannes alone thought nothing specially about it, not comprehending the extraordinary concern of the others.

But, behold! After the policemen and the presumptive mayor had stood a while at the entrance to the camp, asking information, they came straight up to Marjon's wagon. They soon had their eyes on Marjon and Johannes, and Johannes at once felt that the affair concerned himself. He felt wretchedly ashamed, and, although he could not remember any evil deed, he felt as if he certainly must have done something very wrong, and that now the law — the *Law*, had come to get him, and to punish him.

"*Jimminy*, Johnnie! Now you're in a pickle!" said Marjon. "She's got you in a hole."

"Who?" asked Johannes, all at sea, and turning pale.

"Well, that furious aunt of yours, of course."

Johannes heard his name called, and he was requested to go with them. While he was hesitating, in miserable silence, Marjon's sister began scolding, in a sharp voice.

But the policemen acted as if they did not hear her, and the chief began, in a kindly, admonitory tone: "Young man, you are a minor — you must obey the orders of your family. Here you are not in your own station. Your aunt is a very nice and excellent lady. You will be much better off with her than you are here. Your aunt is influential, and you must do what she says. That is the wisest way."

In his uncertainty, Johannes looked round at Markus and asked:

"What shall I do?"

Gravely, without any consolation in the look he gave him, Markus said: "Do you think, Johannes, that I shall tell you every time what you ought to do? That would not make you any wiser. Do what seems to you best, and do not be afraid."

"Come, boy, this isn't a matter of choice," said the gentleman with the cane. "You can't stay, and that's the end of it."

And when Johannes started to follow, Marjon threw herself upon his shoulder, and began to cry. The Fair-people drew together in groups, muttering.

But Johannes did not cry. He was thinking of his Aunt Seréna's tidy house, and of the fresh, spacious chamber with its large bed curtained with green serge, and of the big bed-tassel.

"Cheer up, Marjon," said he. "I'll not forget you. Good-by till we meet again."

And with the three officials he went his way to Vrede-best, often turning round to look at the camp, and to wave his hand at the weeping Marjon.

V

"WELL, well, Master Johannes!" said Daatje, the old servant, as she thrust the heated bed-pan between the fresh linen sheets. "Truly, that was a blessed escape for you; like getting out of purgatory into paradise — away from those vile people to be with our mistress. That was fortunate, indeed. My! My!"

Damp sheets are dangerous, even in midsummer, and Daatje had been drilled very strictly by her mistress in caring for the comfort of guests.

Daatje wore a snow-white cap and a purple cotton gown. Her face was wrinkled, and her hands and arms were still more so. She had been an astonishingly long time in Aunt Seréna's service — perhaps forty years — and lost no opportunity clearly to prove to Johannes what an excellent being his aunt was: always polite and kind, always ready to assist, a blessing to the poor, a refuge for every one in the neighborhood, adored by all who knew her, and pure as an angel.

"She is converted," said Daatje, "yes, truly converted. Ask whoever you please; like her there are not many living."

Johannes perceived that "converted" meant "very good." According to Daatje, the natural man was not good, and it was necessary for every one to be converted before he was fit for anything. For a long time before falling asleep, while looking around the big, quiet bedroom, Johannes lay thinking over these things. A night-light was spluttering in a glass filled with equal parts of water and oil. As soon as the flame was lighted, behind the milk-white, translucent shade appeared strange, dreamy landscapes — formed by the unequal thicknesses.

The chamber had an ancient, musty odor, and all the furniture bore an old-fashioned stateliness. There was a queer

pattern upon the green bed-curtains, distressing to see; like half-opened eyes, alternately squinting. The big bed-tassel hung down from above in dogged dignity, like the tail of a lion keeping watch up above, on the canopy of the four-poster.

Johannes felt very comfortable, yet there was something uncanny around him that he did not quite relish. Once, it really seemed to be the ponderous linen-chest of dark wood, with its big, brass-handled drawers, upon which stood, under a bell-glass, a basket filled with wax fruit. What the pictures represented could not be seen in the dim light, but they were in the secret too, as was also the night-stand with its crocheted cover, and the fearfully big four-poster.

Every half-hour "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" rang through the house, as if those out in the hall and in the vestibule were also in the secret; the only one left out being the little fellow in clean underclothes and a night-gown much too big for him, who lay there, wide awake, looking around him. In the midst of all these solid, important, and dignified things, he was a very odd and out-of-place phenomenon. He felt that, in a polite way, he was being made sport of. Besides, it remained to be seen whether, after his more or less unmannerly adventures, he could ever be taken into confidence. Evidently the entire house was, if not precisely hostile, yet in a very unfriendly attitude. He kept his eye upon the bed-tassel, all ready to see the lion wag his tail. In order to do that, however, he must surely first become "converted," just like Aunt Seréna.

When the day dawned, this new life became more pleasant than he had anticipated. Aunt Seréna presided at the breakfast, which consisted of tea, fresh rolls, currant buns, sweet, dark rye-bread, and pulverized aniseed. Upon the pier-tables, bright with sunshine, stood jars of Japanese blue-ware, filled with great, round bouquets of roses, mignonette, and variegated, ornamental grasses. The long glass doors stood open, and the odor of new-mown grass streamed in from the garden

to the room, which was already deliciously fragrant with the roses and mignonette, and the fine tea.

Aunt Seréna made no allusion to the foregoing day, nor to the death of Johannes' father. She was full of kindly attentions, and interrogated him affably, yet in a very resolute manner, concerning what he had learned at school, and asked who had given him religious instruction. It was now vacation time, and he might rest a little longer, and enjoy himself; but then would come the school again and the catechism.

Until now Johannes had had small satisfaction out of his solemn resolution to value men more highly in order to live with them in a well-disposed way. But this time he was more at ease. The nice, cool house, the sunshine, the sweet smells, the flowers, the fresh rolls, everything put him in good humor; and when Aunt Seréna herself was so in harmony with her surroundings, he was soon prepared to see her in the light of Daatje's glorification. He gazed confidently into the gleaming glasses of her spectacles, and he also helped her carry the big, standing work-basket, out of which she drew the bright-colored worsteds for her embroidery — a very extensive and everlasting piece of work.

But the garden! It was a wonder — the joy of his new life. After being released by his aunt until the hour for coffee, he raced into it like a young, unleashed hound — hunting out all the little lanes, paths, flower-plots, arbors, knolls, and the small pool; and then he felt almost as if in Windekind's realm again. A shady avenue was there which made two turns, thus seeming to be very long. There were paths between thick lilac-bushes already in bloom; and there were mock-oranges, still entirely covered with exceedingly fragrant white flowers. There was a small, artificial hill in that garden, with a view toward the west, over the adjacent nursery. Aunt Seréna was fond of viewing a fine sunset, and often came to the seat on the hilltop. There was a plot of roses, very fragrant, and as big as a plate. There were vivid, fiery red poppies

with woolly stems, deep blue larkspurs, purple columbines, tall hollyhocks, like wrinkled paper, with their strange, strong odor. There were long rows of saxifrage, a pair of dark brown beeches; and everywhere, as exquisite surprises, fruit trees — apples, pears, plums, medlars, dogberries, and hazelnuts — scattered among the trees which bore no fruit.

Indeed, the world did not now seem so bad, after all. A human being — a creature admirably and gloriously perfect — a human dwelling filled with attractive objects, and, close beside, a charming imitation of Windekind's realm, in which to repose. And all in the line of duty, with no departure from the prescribed path. Assuredly, Johannes had looked only on the dark side of life. To confess this was truly mortifying.

Towards twelve o'clock Daatje was heard in the cool kitchen, noisily grinding coffee, and Johannes ventured just a step into her domain, where, on all sides, the copper utensils were shining. In a little courtyard, some bird-cages were hanging against the ivy-covered walls. One large cage contained a skylark. He sat, with upraised beak and fixed gaze, on a little heap of grass. Above him, at the top of the cage, was stretched a white cloth.

"That's for his head," said Daatje, "if he should happen to forget he was in a cage, and try to fly into the air."

Next to this, in tiny cages, were finches. They hopped back and forth, back and forth, from one perch to another. That was all the room they had; and there they cried, "Pink! Pink!" Now and then one of them would sing a full strain. Thus it went the whole day long.

"They are blind," said Daatje. "They sing finer so."

"Why?" asked Johannes.

"Well, boy, they can't see, then, whether it is morning or evening, and so they keep on singing."

"Are you converted, too, Daatje?" asked Johannes.

"Yes, Master Johannes, that grace is mine. I know where I'm going to. Not many can say that after me."

"Who besides you?"

"Well, I, and our mistress, and Dominie Kraalboom."

"Does a converted person keep on doing wrong?"

"Wrong? Now I've got you! No, indeed! I can do no more wrong. It's more wrong even if you stand on your head to save your feet. But don't run through the kitchen now with those muddy shoes. The foot-scraper is in the yard. This is not a runway, if you please."

The luncheon was not less delicious: fresh, white bread, smoked beef, cake and cheese, and very fragrant coffee, whose aroma filled the entire house. Aunt Seréna talked about church-going, about the choosing of a profession, and about pure and honest living. Johannes, being in a kindly mood, and inclined to acquiescence, avoided argument.

In the afternoon, as he sat dreaming in the shady avenue of lindens, Aunt Seréna came bringing a tray, bearing a cooky and a glass of cherry-brandy.

At half-past five came dinner. Daatje was an excellent cook, and dishes which were continually recurring on stated days were particularly well prepared. Vermicelli soup, with forced-meat balls, minced veal and cabbage, middlings pudding with currant juice: that was the first meal, later often recalled. Aunt Seréna asked a blessing and returned thanks, and Johannes, with lowered eyes and head a little forward, appeared, from the movement of his lips, to be doing a little of the same thing.

Through the long twilight, Aunt Seréna and Johannes sat opposite each other, each one in front of a reflector. Aunt Seréna was thrifty, and, since the street lantern threw its light into the room, she was not in a hurry to burn her own oil. Only the unpretending little light for the making of the tea was glimmering behind the panes of milk-white glass — with landscapes not unlike those upon the night-light.

In complete composure, with folded hands, sat Aunt Seréna in the dusk, making occasional remarks, until Daatje came to inquire "if the mistress did not wish to make ready for the

evening." Then Daatje wound up the patent lamp, causing it to give out a sound as if it were being strangled. A quarter of an hour later it was regulated, and, as soon as the cozy, round ring of light shone over the red table-cover, Aunt Seréna said, in the most contented way: "Now we have the dear little lamp again!"

At half-past ten there was a sandwich and a glass of milk for Johannes. Daatje stood ready with the candle, and, upstairs, the night-light, the chest of drawers with the wax fruit, the green bed-curtains, and the impressive bed-tassel were waiting for him. Johannes also descried something new — a big Bible — upon his night-table. There was no appearance yet of any attempt at a reconciliation on the part of the furniture. The cuckoo continued to address himself exclusively to the stilly darkness, in absolute disregard of Johannes; but the latter did not trouble himself so very much about it, and soon fell fast asleep.

The morning differed but little from the foregoing one. Some Bibles were lying ready upon the breakfast-table. Daatje came in, took her place majestically, folded her half-bare wrinkled arms — and Aunt Seréna read aloud. The day before, Aunt Seréna had made a departure from this, her custom, uncertain how Johannes would take it; but, having found the boy agreeable and polite, she intended now to resume the readings. She read a chapter of Isaiah, full of harsh denunciations which seemed to please Daatje immensely. The latter wore a serious look, her lips pressed close together, occasionally nodding her head in approval, while she sniffed resolutely. Johannes found it very disconcerting, and could not, with his best endeavors, keep his attention fixed. He was listening to the twittering of the starlings on the roof, and the cooing of a wood-dove in the beech tree.

In front of him he saw a steel engraving, representing a young woman, clad in a long garment, clinging with outstretched arms to a big stone cross that stuck up out of a restless waste of waters. Rays of light were streaming down

from above, and the young person was looking trustfully up into them. The inscription below the engraving read, "The Rock of Ages," and Johannes was deep in speculation as to how the young lady had gotten there, and especially how she was to get away from there. It was not to be expected that she could long maintain herself in that uncomfortable position — surely not for ages. That refuge looked like a peculiarly precarious one; unless, indeed, something better might be done with those rays of light.

Upon the same wall hung a motto, drawn in colored letters, amid a superfluity of flowers and butterflies, saying: "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want."

This awakened irreverent thoughts in Johannes' mind. When the Bible-reading was over, he was suddenly moved to make a remark.

"Aunt Seréna," said he, conscious of a rising color, and feeling rather giddy on account of his boldness, "is it only because the Lord is your Shepherd that you do not lack for anything?"

But he had made a bad break.

Aunt Seréna's face took on a severe expression, and adjusting her spectacles somewhat nervously, she said: "I willingly admit, dear Johannes, that in many respects I have been blessed beyond my deserts; but ought not you to know — you who had such a good and well-informed father — that it is very unbecoming in young people to pass judgment, thoughtlessly, upon the lives of older ones, when they know nothing either of their trials or of their blessings?"

Johannes sat there, deeply abashed, suddenly finding himself to be a silly, saucy boy.

But Daatje stood up, and in a manner peculiarly her own — bending a little, arms akimbo — said, with great emphasis: "I'll tell you what, mistress! you're too good. He ought to have a spanking — on the bare spanking place, too!" And forthwith she went to the kitchen.

VI

THERE were regularly recurring changes in Aunt Seréna's life. In the first place, the going to church. That was the great event of the week; and the weekly list of services and of the officiating clergymen was devoutly discussed. Then the lace cap, with its silk strings, was exchanged for a bonnet with a gauze veil; and Daatje was careful to have the church books, mantle, and gloves ready, in good reason. Nearly always Daatje went also; if not, then the sermon was repeated to her in detail.

Johannes accompanied his aunt with docility, and tried, not without a measure of success, to appreciate the discourse.

The visits of Minister Kraalboom were not less important. Johannes saw, with amazement, that his aunt, at other times so stately and estimable, now almost humbled herself in reverent and submissive admiration. She treated this man, in whom Johannes could see no more than a common, kindly gentleman, with a head of curling grey hair, and with round, smoothly shaven cheeks, as if he belonged to a higher order of beings; and the adored one accepted her homage with candid readiness. The most delicious things the aunt had, in fine wines, cakes, and liqueurs, were set before him; and, as the minister was a great smoker, Daatje had a severe struggle with herself after every visit, between her respect for the servant of the Lord and her detestation of scattered ashes, stumps of cigars, and tobacco-smelling curtains.

Once a week there was a "Krans," or sewing circle, and then came Aunt Seréna's lady friends. They were more or less advanced in years, but all of them very unprepossessing women, among whom Aunt Seréna, with her erect figure and fine, pale face, made a very good appearance; and she was clearly regarded as a leader. Puff-cakes were offered, and warm wine or "milk-tea" was poured. The aim of the

gatherings was charitable. Talking busily, the friends made a great many utterly useless, and, for the most part, tasteless, articles: patchwork quilts, anti-macassars, pin-cushions, flower-pot covers, picture frames of dried grasses, and all that sort of thing. Then a lottery, or "tombola,"* as it was called, was planned for. Every one had to dispose of tickets, and the proceeds were given, sometimes to a poor widow, sometimes to a hospital, but more often, however, to the cause of missions.

On such evenings Johannes sat, silent, in his corner, with one of the illustrated periodicals of which his aunt had a large chestful. He listened to the conversation, endeavoring to think it noble and amiable; and he looked, also, at the trifling fingers. No one interfered with him, and he drank his warm wine and ate his cake, content to be left in peace; for he felt attracted toward none of the flowers composing this human wreath.

But Aunt Seréna did not consider her duty accomplished in these ways alone. She went out from them to busy herself in parish calls on various households — rich as well as poor — wherever she thought she could do any good. It was a great satisfaction to Johannes when, at his request that he be allowed to go with her, she replied: "Certainly, dear boy; why not?"

Johannes accompanied her this first time under great excitement. Now he was going to be initiated into ways of doing and being good. This was a fine chance.

So they set out together, Johannes carrying a large satchel containing bags of rice, barley, sugar, and split peas. For the sick there were jars of smoked beef and a flask of wine.

They first went to see Vrouw Stok, who lived not far away, in French Lane. Vrouw Stok evidently counted upon such a visit, and she was extremely voluble. According to her statements, one would say that no nobler being dwelt upon earth than Aunt Seréna, and no nicer, more grateful, and contented

* Lottery-Fair.

creature than Vrouw Stok. And Dominie Kraalboom also was lavishly praised.

After that, they went to visit the sick, in reeking little rooms in dreary back streets. And everywhere they met with reiterations of gratitude and pleasure from the recipients, together with unanimous praising of Aunt Seréna, until Johannes several times felt the tears gather in his eyes. The barley and the split peas were left where they would be of use, as were also the wine and the jars of smoked beef.

Johannes and his aunt returned home very well pleased. Aunt Seréna was rejoiced over her willing and appreciative votary, and Johannes over this well-conducted experiment in philanthropy. If this were to be the way, all would be well. In a high state of enthusiasm he sped to the garden to dream away the quiet afternoon amid the richly laden raspberry-bushes.

"Aunt Seréna," said Johannes, at table that noon, "that poor boy in the back street, with the inflamed eyes and that ulcerated leg — is he a religious boy?"

"Yes, Johannes, so far as I know."

"Then is the Lord his Shepherd, too?"

"Yes, Johannes," said his aunt, more seriously now, having in mind his former remark. But Johannes spoke quite innocently, as if deep in his own thoughts.

"Why is it, then, that he lacks so much? He has never seen the dunes nor the ocean. He goes from his bed to his chair, and from his chair to his bed, and knows only that dirty room."

"The Lord knows what is good for us, Johannes. If he is pious, and remains so, sometime he will lack for nothing."

"You mean when he is dead? . . . But, Aunt Seréna, if I am pious I shall go to heaven, too, shall I not?"

"Certainly, Johannes."

"But, Aunt Seréna, I have had a fine time in your home, with raspberries and roses, and delicious things to eat, and he has had nothing but pain and plain living. Yet

the end is the same. That does not seem fair, does it, Aunt Seréna?"

"The Lord knows what is good for us, Johannes. The most severely tried are to Him the best beloved."

"Then, if it is not a blessing to have good things, we ought to long for trials and privations?"

"We should be resigned to what is given us," said Aunt Seréna, not quite at her ease.

"And yet be thankful only for all those delicious things? Although we know that trials are better?"

Johannes spoke seriously, without a thought of irony, and Aunt Seréna, glad to be able to close the conversation, replied:

"Yes, Johannes, always be thankful. Ask the dominie about it."

Dominie Kraalboom came in the evening, and, as Aunt Seréna repeated to him Johannes' questions, his face took on the very same scowl it always wore when he stood up in the pulpit; his wry mouth rolled the *r*'s, and, with the emphasis of delightful certainty, he uttered the following:

"My dear boy, that which you, in your childlike simplicity, have asked, is — ah, indeed — ah, the great problem over which the pious in all ages have pondered and meditated — pondered and meditated. It behooves us to enjoy gratefully, and without questioning, what the good Lord, in His eternal mercy, is pleased to pour out upon us. We should, as much as lies in our power, relieve the afflictions that He allots to others, and at the same time teach the sufferers to be resigned to the inevitable. For He knows what we all have need of, and tempers the wind to the shorn lamb."

Then said Johannes: "So you, and Aunt Seréna, and I, have a good time now, because we have no need of all that misery? And that sick boy does need it? Is that it, Dominie?"

"Yes, my dear boy, that is it."

"And has Daatje, too, need of privations? Daatje said

that she was converted as completely as you and Aunt Seréna were."

"Daatje is a good, pious soul, entirely satisfied with what the Lord has apportioned her."

"Yes, Dominie; but," said Johannes, his voice trembling with his feeling, "I am not converted yet, not the least bit. I am not at all good. Why, then, have I so much more given me than Daatje has? Daatje has only a small pen, up in the garret, while I have the big guest-room; she must do the scrubbing and eat in the kitchen, while I eat in the house and get many more dainties. And it is not the Lord who does that, but Aunt Seréna."

Dominie Kraalboom threw a sharp glance at Johannes, and drank in silence, from his goblet of green glass, the fragrant Rhine wine. Aunt Seréna looked, with a kind of suspense, at the dominie's mouth, expecting the forthcoming oracle to dissipate all uncertainty.

When the dominie spoke again, his voice was far less kindly. He said: "I believe, my young friend, that it was high time your aunt took you home here. Apparently, you have been exposed to very bad influences. Accustom yourself to the thought that older and wiser people know, better than yourself, what is good for you; and be thankful for the good things, without picking them to pieces. God has placed each one in his station, where he must be active for his own and his fellow-creatures' salvation."

With a sigh of contentment, Aunt Seréna took up her embroidery again. Johannes was frightened at the word "picking," which brought to mind an old enemy — Pluizer. Dominie Kraalboom hastened to light a fresh cigar, and to begin about the "tombola."

That night, in the great bed, Johannes lay awake a long while, uneasy and restless. His mind was clear and on the alert, and he was in a state of expectancy. Things were not going right, though. Something was the matter, but he knew

not what. The furniture, in the still night-time, wore a hostile, almost threatening air. The call of the cuckoo spelled mischief.

About three or four o'clock, when the night-light had sputtered and gone out, he lay still wider awake. He was looking at the bed-cord, which, bigger and thicker than ordinary, was growing ominously visible in the first dim light.

Suddenly — as true as you live — he saw it move! A slight quiver — a spasmodic, serpentine undulation, like the tail of a nervous cat.

Then, very swiftly and without a rustle, he saw a small shadow drop down the bed-cord. Was it a mouse?

After that he heard a thin little voice:

"Johannes! Johannes!"

He knew that voice. He lifted up his head and took a good look.

Seated upon the bed-tassel, astride the handle, was his old friend Wistik.

He was the same old Wistik, looking as important as ever; yes, his puckered little face wore a peculiar, almost frightened expression of suspense. He was not wearing his little acorn-cup, but a smart cap that appeared black in the twilight.

"I have news for you," cried Wistik. "A great piece of news. Come with me, quick!"

"How do you do, Wistik?" whispered Johannes. He lay cozily between the sheets, and was glad to see his friend again. Let the chest of drawers and the cuckoo be as disagreeable as they wanted to, now; here was his friend again. "Must I go with you? How can I? Where to?"

"This way — up here with me," whispered Wistik. "I have found something. It will make you open your eyes. Just give me your hand. That's the best way. You can leave your body lying here while you are away."

"That will be a fine sight," said Johannes.

But it happened without any trouble. He put out his hand, and in a twinkling he was sitting beside Wistik, on the bed-

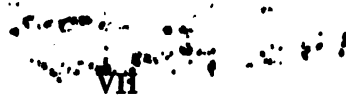
tassel. And truly, as he looked down below, there he saw his body lying peacefully fast asleep. A ray of light streamed into the room, through the clover-leaf opening in the blinds, and lighted up the sleeping head. Johannes thought it an extremely pretty sight, and himself still a really nice boy as he lay there among the pillows, with his dark curly hair about the slightly contracted brows.

"Do you believe that I am very bad, Wistik?" said he, looking down upon himself.

"No," said Wistik, "we must never fib to each other. Neither am I bad; not a bit. I have found that out now, positively. Oh, I have discovered so much since we last met! But we must not admire ourselves on that account. That would be stupid. Come, now, for we have not much time."

Together they climbed up the bed-cord. It was easy work, for Johannes was light and small, and he climbed nimbly up the shaggy rope. But it felt warm, and hairy, and alive in his hands!

Up they worked themselves, through the folds of the canopy. But the bed-cord did not end there. Oh, no! It went on farther and grew bigger and bigger, and then. . . . What they came to, I will tell you in the following chapter.



It was, indeed, a real lion's tail, and not a bed-cord.

Johannes and Wistik were now sitting on the very back of the mighty beast. Above them it was all dark, but out in front — away where the lion was looking — the daylight could be seen.

They let themselves down cautiously to the ground. They were in a large cave. Johannes saw streaks of water glistening along the rocky walls.

Gently as they tried to slip past the monster, he yet discovered them, and turned his shaggy head around, watching them distrustfully.

"He will not do anything," said Wistik. And the lion looked at them as if they were a pair of flies, not worth eating up.

They passed on into the sharp sunlight outside, and, after several blinding moments, Johannes saw before him a wide-spread, glorious mountain view.

They were standing on the slope of a high, rocky mountain. Down below, they saw deep, verdant valleys, whence the sound of babbling brooks and waterfalls ascended.

In the distance was the dazzling, blinding glitter of sunshine upon a sea of deepest, darkest blue. They could see the strand, and every now and then it grew white with the combing surf. But there was no sound; it was too far away.

Overhead, the sky was clear, but Johannes could not see the face of the sun. It was very still all around, and the blue and white flowers among the rocks were motionless. Only the rushing of the water in the valleys could be heard.

"Now, Johannes, what do you say to this? It is more beautiful than the dunes, is it not?" said Wistik, nodding his head in complete satisfaction.

Johannes was enchanted at the sight of that vast expanse

before him, with the rocks, the flowers, the ravines, and the sea.

"Oh, Wistik, where are we?" asked he, softly, enraptured with the view.

"My new cap came from here," said Wistik.

Johannes looked at him. The pretty cap that had appeared black in the twilight proved to be bright red. It was a Phrygian cap.

"Phrygia?" asked Johannes, for he knew the name of those caps well.

"Maybe," said Wistik. "Is not this a great find? And I know, too . . ." Here he spoke in whispers again, very importantly, behind the back of his hand, in Johannes' ear: "Here they know something more about the little gold key, and the book, which we are both trying to find."

"Is the book here?" asked Johannes.

"I do not know yet," said Wistik, a trifle disturbed. "I did not say that, but the people know about it—that is certain."

"Are there people here?"

"Certainly there are. Human beings, and elves, and all kinds of animals. And they know all about it."

"Is Windekind here, too, Wistik?"

"I do not doubt it, Johannes, but I have not seen him yet. Shall we try to find him?"

"Oh, yes, Wistik! But how are we going to get down there? It is too steep. We shall break our necks."

"No, indeed, if only you are not afraid. Just let yourself float. Then you will be all right."

At first Johannes did not dare. He was wide awake, not dreaming; and if any one wide awake were to throw himself down from a high rock, he would meet his death. If one were dreaming, then nothing would happen. If only he could know, now, whether he was awake or dreaming!

"Come, Johannes, we have only a little time."

Then he risked it, and let himself drift downward. And it was splendid — so comfortable! He floated gently down

through the mild, still air, arms and legs moving as in swimming.

"Is it only a dream, then?" he asked, looking down attentively at the beautiful, blooming world below him.

"What do you mean?" asked Wistik. "You are Johannes, just the same, and what you see, Johannes sees. Your body lies asleep, in Vrede-best, at your aunt's. But did you ever in the daytime see anything so distinct as this?"

"No," said Johannes.

"Well, then, you can just as well call your Aunt Seréna and Vrede-best a dream — just as much as this."

A large bird — an eagle — swept around in stately circles, spying at them with its sharp, fierce eyes.

Below, in the dark green of the valley, a small white temple, with its columns, was visible. Close beside it a mountain stream tumbled splashing down below. Still and straight as arrows, tall cypresses, with their pale grey trunks and black-green foliage, encircled it. A fine mist rose up from the splashing water, and, crowned with an exquisite arc of color, remained suspended amidst the glossy green myrtle and magnolia. Only where the water splattered did the leaves stir; elsewhere everything was motionless.

But over all rang the warbling and chattering of birds, from out the forest shade. Finches sang their fullest strains, and the thrushes fluted their changeful tune, untiringly.

But listen! That was not a bird! That was a more knowing, more cordial song; a melody that *said* something — something which Johannes could feel, like the words of a friend. It was a reed, played charmingly. No bird could sing like that.

"Oh, Wistik, who is playing? It is more lovely than blackbird or nightingale."

"Pst!" said Wistik, opening his eyes wide. "That is only the flute, yet. By and by you will hear the singing."

They sank down upon a mountain meadow, in a wide valley. The limpid, blue-green rivulet flowed through the

sunny grass-plot, between blood-red anemones, yellow and white narcissi, and deep purple hyacinths. On both sides of it were thick, round azalea-bushes, entirely covered with fragrant, brick-red flowers. White butterflies were fluttering back and forth across it. On the other side rose tall laurel, myrtle, olive, and chestnut trees; and still higher the cedars and pines — half-way up the mountain wall of red-grey granite.

It was so still and peaceful and great blue dragon-flies with black wings were rocking on the yellow narcissus flowers nodding along the stream.

Then Johannes saw a fleeing deer, springing up from the sod in swift, sinewy leaps; then another, and another.

The flute-playing sounded close by, but now there was singing also. It came from a shady grove of chestnut trees, and echoed gloriously from mountain-side to mountain-side, while the brook maintained the rhythm with its purling, murmuring flow. The voices of men and women could be heard, vigorously strong and sweetly clear; and, intermingling with these somewhat rude shouts of joy, the high-pitched voices of children.

On they came, the people, a joyous, bright-colored procession. They all bore flowers — as wreaths upon their heads, as festoons in their hands or about their shoulders — flute-players, men, women, and children. And they themselves seemed living flowers, in their clear-colored, charming apparel. They all had abundant, curling hair which gleamed like dull gold in the sunshine, that tinted everything. Their limbs and faces were tanned by the sun, but when the folds of their garments fell aside, their bodies beneath them shone white as milk. The older ones kept step, with careful dignity; the children bore little baskets, with fruit, ribbons, and green branches; but the young men and maidens danced as they went, keeping the rhythm of the music in a way Johannes had never seen before. They swayed their bodies in a swinging movement, with little leaps; sometimes even standing still,



in graceful postures, their arms alternately raised above their heads, their loosened garments flowing free, and again arranging themselves in charming folds.

And how beautiful they were! Not one, Johannes noted, old or young, who had not those noble, refined features, and those clear, ardent eyes, in which was to be found the deep meaning he was always seeking in human faces — that which made a person instantly his friend — that made him long to be cordial and intimate — that which he had first perceived in Windekind's eyes, and that he missed so keenly in all those human faces among which he had had to live. *That*, they all had — man and woman, grey-haired one and little child.

"Oh, Wistik," he whispered, so moved he could scarcely speak, "are they really human beings, and not elves? Can human beings be so beautiful? They are more beautiful than flowers — and much more beautiful than the animals. They are the most beautiful of all things in this world!"

"What did I tell you?" said Wistik, rubbing his little legs in his satisfaction. "Yes, human beings rank first in nature, — altogether first. But until now we have had to do with the wrong ones — the trash, Johannes — the refuse. The right ones are not so bad. I have always told you that."

Johannes did not remember about it, but would not contradict his friend. He only hoped that those dear and charming people would come to him, recognize him as their comrade, and receive him as one of them. That would make him very happy; he would love the people truly, and be proud of his human nature.

But the splendid train drew near, and passed on, without his having been observed by any one; and Johannes also heard them singing in a strange, unintelligible language.

"May I not speak to them?" he asked, anxiously. "Would they understand me?"

"Indeed, no!" said Wistik, indignantly. "What are you thinking about? This is not a fairy tale nor a dream. This is real — altogether real."

"Then shall I have to go back again to Aunt Seréna, and Daatje, and the dominie?"

"Yes, to be sure!" said Wistik, in confusion.

"And the little key, and the book, and Windekind?"

"We can still be seeking them."

"That is always the way with you!" said Johannes, bitterly. "You promise something wonderful, and the end is always a disappointment."

"I cannot help that," said Wistik.

They went farther, both of them silent and somewhat discouraged. Then they came to human habitations amid the verdure. They were simple structures of dark wood and white stone, artistically decorated and colored. Vines were growing against the pillars, and from the roofs hung the branches of a strange, thickly leaved plant having red flowers, so that the walls looked as if they were bleeding. Birds were everywhere making their nests, and little golden statues could be seen resting in marble niches. There were no doors nor barriers — only here and there a heavy, many-colored rug hanging before an entrance. It seemed very silent and lonely there, for everybody was away; yet nothing was locked up, nor concealed. An exquisite perfume was smoldering in bronze basins in front of the houses, and columns of blue smoke coiled gently up into the still air.

Then they ventured farther into the forest that lay behind the houses. It was dusky twilight there, and all was solemnly and mysteriously silent. The moss grew thick upon the massive rocks between which the mighty chestnut and cedar trees took root. Foaming rivulets were flowing down; and frequently it seemed to Johannes as if he saw some creature — a deer or other animal — peep at him, and then dart away between the tree-trunks. "What are they? Deer?" asked Johannes.

"Indeed, no!" said Wistik, lifting a finger. "Only listen! They are laughing. Deer do not laugh."

Truly, Johannes heard every now and then, as he saw a figure disappear in the twilight of the woods, a soft peal of laughter — clearly, human laughter.

"Now! now we are going to see him!" said Wistik.

"Who?" asked Johannes.

"Pst!" said Wistik, very mysteriously, pointing toward an open place in the forest.

Johannes saw there such a pretty and captivating spectacle that he stood speechless, with only a light laugh of joy and amazement.

The forest was more open there, and the sun shone in upon a grassy, flower-covered spot. In the centre stood a single, extraordinarily large chestnut tree. About its foot, bordered with white narcissi, a little stream of purest water was winding. On every side tall rhododendrons stood out in all their beauty of dark foliage, and hundreds of hemispherical clusters of purple flowers.

At the foot of the tree, in the shade of its leaves, a strange figure, dark and shaggy, was sitting in a circle of exquisite, fair-skinned beings. Johannes did not know what to think of them, they were so light and so delicate. And they lay in all sorts of graceful attitudes amid the tall grass and the narcissus flowers. They seemed to be human beings, but they were so small; and they were as white as the foam of the brook. Their long hair was so feathery light, it seemed to float about their heads in the motionless air.

In the centre sat the dark, shaggy figure, with his arms upon his knees, and his hands extended. He had a long, grey beard, an old, wrinkled, friendly face, large gold earrings, a wreath of leaves upon his head, a red flower-festoon adorned with living yellow butterflies about his shoulders, bare, brown arms, a deep, broad, hairy chest, and legs entirely covered with a growth of red-brown fleece. On each hand rested a bird — a finch — and each bird sang, in turn, his longest strain. Then the old figure laughed, and nodded his approval, and the fair little beings joined in the laugh. On his shoulder

sat a squirrel, shucking chestnuts so that the shells fell upon his beard.

"Oh, Wistik!" cried Johannes, half laughing, half crying, with rapture, "I know who that is — I know him. That is Pan — Father Pan!"

"Very likely!" said Wistik, with a knowing look. "Now *he* will listen to us. Let's try!"

Diffidently, Johannes went nearer. At the first step he took in the open space, the little white nymphs sped apart in a trice — as swiftly and softly as if they had been turned into newts — and there was nothing to be heard save their light, mocking laughter, and a slight rustling in the dark shadow of the rhododendrons. The two finches flew away and the yellow butterflies, also, from their flower-festoon; and the squirrel shot into the tree — his little nails clattering as he went. But Pan remained sitting, with head bent forward, down-dropping hands, and peering, friendly eyes.

"I know you all right!" came from the wide mouth of Pan, while he nodded to Johannes, and looked at him with his large head a little to one side.

"Oh, Father Pan!" exclaimed Johannes, quivering with awe and suspense, "do you know me? Will you answer me? Tell me where we are, then!"

Continuing to nod in a quieting, affable manner, Pan replied: "Phrygia! Golden Era — to be sure!"

"And do you know Wistik, too? And Windekind? And do you know about the little key, and the book?"

"Wistik? Certainly! Would that I knew all, though! — You know how to ask questions, Vraagal. Know-all and Ask-all! A pretty pair you are!"

And Pan laughed heartily, showing his great white teeth in an astonishingly large mouth.

"But tell me, Father Pan! Who is Windekind?"

"My dearest dear! My darling, clever little son! That is who he is. We are two yolks of one egg, although I

am old, rough, and shaggy, and he is sleek, and fine, and beautiful."

"Shall I ever see him again?"

"Why not? He comes here often; and you also like it here, do you not?"

"But Wistik said I could not stay."

"You cannot do so — now; but why could you not come back again sometime?"

"Could I?"

Pan's face took on a most amused, astonished look, and he puffed out his cheeks.

"You dear little Vraagal! Give me your hand." Johannes laid his small hand trustfully in the broad open palm. The large hand was dark and shaggy on the outside, but white, and smooth, and firm on the inside. "Do you not know that yet? Then let Father Pan make you happy with a word. Do not forget it, mind! *Vraagal can do whatever he wills to do—everything* — if he will only be patient! But tell me now, — how did you know me?"

"I have seen statues and engravings of you."

"Do I look like them?"

"No!" said Johannes. "I think you are much nicer. In the prints you look like the Devil."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Pan, raising his heavy hands above his head, and clapping them together. "That is who I am, Vraagal. They have made a devil of me, so as to drive people away. But do you believe, now, that I am bad? Give me your paddy again! And now the other one!"

This time Johannes laid both his own in Pan's two giant hands, and said: "I know who you are. You are good. You are Nature!"

"Hold your tongue, little hypocrite, with your conceited platitudes! Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

Johannes blushed deeply; tears fell from his eyes, and he wished he could sink out of sight. But Pan drew him up closer and stroked his cheek.

"Now, do not cry! It is not so bad. You have come, too, out of a dreary nest. I am not evil — neither is Wistik. Only trust us."

"I have told him that, too," said Wistik, earnestly and emphatically.

"Little Vraagal," continued Pan, looking very serious, "there is, indeed, an evil Devil, but he is far more ugly than I am. Is it not so, Wistik? You know him. Is he not much uglier? Tell us!"

Johannes never forgot the look on Wistik's face as Father Pan asked him this in a loud voice, with a keen, serious regard. The little fellow grew as pale as death, his mouth dropped open, he pressed both hands upon his stomach, and from his trembling lips came the almost inaudible word: "Horrible!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Pan. "Well, I am not that. Sometime Wistik must point him out to you. He looks much more like those foolish people you have just come from than like me."

"Aunt Seréna?" asked Johannes, astounded. "Is *she*, then, not good and first-rate? Is *she* a foolish person?"

"Now, now, you dear little Vraagal!" said Pan, in palliation. "Everything is relative. But it is a fact that she looks more like the Devil than I do."

"How can that be?" asked Johannes, in amazement.

Pan grew a little impatient. "Does that puzzle you? Then ask her to show you the little tree she has in her safe, with the golden apples growing on it. Do not forget!"

"Good, good!" shouted Wistik, clapping his hands with delight.

At this moment there came suddenly from the distance an alarming sound—a short, hoarse, resounding roar that echoed through the forest.

"The lion!" cried Wistik; and away he went, as fast as he could run.

Johannes also was greatly frightened. He knew it was

time to leave, but he would not go quite yet. He asked, imploringly:

"Father Pan, shall I find the book?"

"Remember what I said to you," replied Pan. "Vraagal can do what Vraagal wills to do. To will is to do. But it must be the right sort of will."

Again that frightful roar resounded, this time much nearer. Johannes stretched out his hand, hesitating between his mounting fears, and his desire to make use of an instant more.

"One more question!" he cried. "Who is Markus?"

At that, he saw Pan's eyes distend, and stare at him with a look full of intense emotion. He seemed as fiercely sorrowful as a wounded animal; and, until now, Johannes had not observed what beautiful great eyes he had. He lifted up his outspread hands—then covered his face with them, and began to weep and wail, loudly. The air grew dense and dark, and a heavy shower descended.

Then, for the third time, the lion roared. . . .

VIII

"It's a downright shame!" said Daatje, snappishly, while unfastening the third shutter, which opened with a shriek and a rumble. Half past-nine — on Saturday, at that — and the room to be tidied up! You'll catch it from Aunt Seréna. Half-past nine! It's a downright shame!"

Johannes was not pleased with this familiarity, as if he were still a mere child; and, in a rebellious spirit, without quite understanding his own object, he muttered: "This thing's got to end."

With Aunt Seréna, disapproval was expressed in a manner very different from that in a kermis-wagon. There was no swearing, nor scolding, nor any din; and no cooking utensils flew out of the window.

But Aunt Seréna would grow a little paler, her fine face become cold and severe like marble, and the very few words that fell from her lips would be short and spoken in a soft, low voice. She knew how, though, to make one so uncomfortable in this way, that he would rather she had thrown a piece of the tea-set at his head.

Johannes, however, neither felt, nor evinced, any remorse. On the contrary, he assumed an independent bearing. He was not saucy, but wonderfully indifferent; neither was he morose, but cheerful and obliging; for his thoughts were full of that beautiful land and its noble people, and of his good Father Pan. Aunt Seréna, herself, felt a little disconcerted.

That evening the circle of lady friends came in full force. There was Juffrouw Frederike — called Free — tall and bowed, with her grey hair in a net. There was Pietekoo, who was always laughing, and saying flattering things, but who could, also, show a tart side upon occasion. There was Suze, who had the name of being so musical, and who, pluming herself on that score, kept on taking piano lessons —

far on in her sixties though she was. There was the saintly Koos, who had once leaped into the water, in a religious frenzy, and who could repeat the sermons, word for word. There was the quiet Neeltje, a bit round-shouldered, and very negligent in her dress, who never said anything, and was always being teased about suitors. There was the widow Slot, who, in her deep voice, uttered short, sarcastic comments, mostly at the expense of poor Neeltje. There was Miebet, the beauty of the company, toward whom Johannes felt a special aversion. They all brought their hand-work, and were speedily deep in conversation. Johannes was greeted in a friendly way as "dear boy" and "good boy," but, after that, as always, was left in peace.

It did seem, listening to their conversation, as if love and meekness reigned undisturbed in their hearts. It was an uninterrupted competition in generosity, each striving to be foremost in helping the others to the footstools, the cozy places, and the various delicacies. Miebet said that she had only one defect — this one, that she always thought of others first, and herself last. From this single defect one could perceive, by comparison, the nature and number of her virtues. To the saintliness of Koos, according to her own testimony, even Daatje and Aunt Seréna would have to yield precedence. She could repeat, word for word, the long, closing prayer of the previous Sunday, and stood alone in this proficiency. Johannes noticed that she could neither read nor write, nor even tell the time, but cunningly contrived to hide her ignorance. Juffrouw Frederike, who was wont to enumerate the excruciating pains that her poor health inflicted upon her, was not silent concerning the heavenly patience with which she endured these trials, and the indifference of the world toward her sufferings.

At seven o'clock came the dominie. He was greeted respectfully, and with a tender solicitude, while he made interested and condescending inquiries after health and cir-

cumstances. Also, he admired and praised the products of womanly industry, deducing therefrom weighty and forceful morals that were listened to in thoughtful silence.

Johannes had received a cold, limp hand-shake. He felt that he had been a long time in disfavor. Neither had Aunt Seréna's stiffness relaxed, and she looked at him now and then, restlessly, as if wishing and expecting that he would show signs of repentance or submissiveness. And it seemed as if the entire circle concerned themselves less about him than ever.

He sat still in his corner, turning the leaves of his penny magazine, his little heart brave and not at all disquieted. But he did not see much of the engravings, and felt more than at other times constrained to listen to the talking.

Then, while all gave quiet attention, Aunt Seréna began an enumeration of all the petty trifles and knick-knacks which had been brought together this time for the "tombola": "three napkin-rings, two corner-brackets, one waste-paper basket worked with worsted, seven anti-macassars, a knitting-needle holder, two sofa-pillows, one lamp-shade, the beautiful fire-screen made by Free, two picture-frames, four pincushions, one needle-book, one patchwork quilt, one pair of slippers, by Miebet, one reticule, one painted teacup, two flower-pieces made of bread, one cabinet of shells, one straw thread-winder, seventeen book-marks, eight pen-wipers, one small postage-stamp picture, two decorated cigar-cases, one ash-holder. That is all, I believe."

"Aunt Seréna," said Johannes, over the top of his penny magazine, "do you know what else you ought to count in?"

A moment of suspense followed. All eyes were turned upon him. Aunt Seréna looked surprised, but kindly inquisitive. The dominie suspected something, and his brows contracted.

"What, my dear boy!" asked Aunt Seréna.

"A couple of gold apples, from your little tree."

There followed a moment of subdued silence. Then Aunt Seréna, with a self-restrained but severe manner, asked:

"What tree do you mean, Johannes?"

"The little tree you have in your chest, with the gold apples growing on it."

Again silence, but all understood; that was clear. Pietekoo even tittered. The others exchanged significant glances. Aunt Seréna's pale face flushed perceptibly, and she shot a glance at the dominie over her spectacles. The dominie took the affair very calmly, gave Johannes a cold, disdainful look, as much as to say that he had all along had his measure, and then, while his eyes narrowed in a smile, he signified to Aunt Seréna, by a quieting motion of the hand, that she ought not to bestow any thought upon such a matter. Thereupon, with assumed unprejudice, and in a sprightly tone, he said:

"This is, indeed, a fine 'tombola'!"

But Aunt Seréna was not to be appeased in this way. She threw back her rustling, purple silk cap-strings with a nervous, trembling gesture (in her the betrayal of vehement emotion), and, standing up, motioned to Johannes to follow her into the vestibule.

Closing the door of the room behind her: "Johannes!" said she, in a voice not quite within control, "Johannes, I will not suffer this! To think of you making me appear ridiculous to others! For shame! And after all the good I thought to have done you! Ought you to have grieved your old aunt so? For shame, Johannes! It is mean and ungrateful of you!"

With a face almost as pale as that of his aunt, Johannes looked straight up into her glistening glasses. There were tears in her voice, and Johannes saw them appear from under the spectacles, and slowly trickle down along the delicate lines of her cheeks.

It was Johannes' turn, now, to feel badly. He was utterly confounded. Who was right — Father Pan or Aunt Seréna? In such straits was he that he would rather be running the streets at such a pace as never to get back again.

The street door stood ajar, the autumn day was drawing to its close in a melancholy twilight, and a drizzling rain was falling. Daatje was standing outside, talking with some one.

"Aunt Seréna," said Johannes, trying hard to control himself, "I know that I am wicked, but I really will be good—*really*—if only I knew. . . ."

Just then there came from outside a sound which made him quiver with agitation. It thrilled through marrow and bone, and he felt his knees giving way. It was the sharp, rasping sound of steel being held against the whetstone; and through the door-crack he saw the glitter of that beautiful fountain of golden sparks.

It sounded to him like a blessed tidings — like the utterance of mercy to one condemned.

"That is Markus!" he cried, with heightened color and shining eyes.

Aunt Seréna went to the door and opened it. There, bowed over his work, stood Markus. Again, he was treading the wheel of the old cart, the one with the footboard. As before, the water was dripping from his old cap, down upon his faded raincoat. His face was sad, and there were deep lines about his mouth.

"Markus!" cried Johannes; and, springing forward, he threw his arms around him, and pressed his head caressingly against the wet clothing.

"For the love of Christ, Boy! What are you doing?" said Daatje. "What Romish freak is this?"

"Oh, Aunt Seréna!" cried Johannes. "May he not come indoors? He is so wet, and so tired! He is a good man — my best friend."

Daatje placed her arms akimbo, and stepped angrily in front of Aunt Seréna and the doorway.

"Now, I'll attend to that. The dear Lord preserve us! Such a dirty lout of a gypsy come into my clean marble hall! That's altogether too much!"

But Aunt Seréna, in that earnest tone which had always

been a command for Daatje — admitting no oppositions — said: "Daatje, go back to the kitchen. I will settle this matter myself."

And turning toward Markus she asked: "Will you not come in and rest?"

Slowly straightening himself up, Markus replied: "I will, Madam." And he laid down his scissors, took off his cap, and walked in.

This time Daatje was disobedient, for she did not return to the kitchen, but remained, arms still akimbo, repeatedly shaking her head, surveying the intruder with horror — especially his feet, and the old coat which he hung upon the hat-rack. And, when Aunt Serena actually let him out of the vestibule into the room itself, she tarried behind the unclosed door, anxiously listening.

Within the room a dead stillness ensued. The dominie's face took on an expression of utter amazement, while he lifted his eyebrows very high, and thrust out his pursed-up lips. Pietekoo tittered in her embarrassment, and then hid her face in her hands. The others looked, now with a puzzled mien at Markus, then in doubtful expectation at Aunt Seréna, with distrust at Johannes, with very expressive glances at one another, and finally, with pretended absorption in their hand-work. The silence was still unbroken.

"Will you take something?" asked Aunt Seréna.

"Yes, Madam, a bit of bread," said Markus, in his calm, gentle voice.

"Would you not rather have a glass of wine, and some cake?"

"No, Madam, if you will excuse me; I prefer common bread."

The dominie thought it time to intervene. He was stung by the censure conveyed in Markus' refusal.

"The Scripture teaches, my friend, that we should eat what is set before us, when we are guests."

"Do you take me for a theologian — or for an apostle?" asked Markus.

"He has the gift of gab," said Mevrouw Slot, in her coarse voice.

In those pure accents which held Johannes breathlessly attentive, Markus continued: "I will even sit at table with witches, but not necessarily eat of their food."

"Dear me! Dear me!" said the dominie, and the ladies cried: "Good gracious!" and other exclamations of disapproval and indignation. "Be a little less uncivil, friend; you are not with your own kind here."

Markus continued, in a calm, friendly tone: "Theologians, however, thank God for many a rude truth, and know, also, how to take parables. Even when with cannibals, an apostle need not eat human flesh."

Widow Slot, who alone of all in the circle seemed to have retained her coolness, here interposed: "We have not improved, yet."

Markus turned toward her and said with great earnestness:

"Who are they who have their portion? Are not the poorest ones they who drink wine and eat cake, and yet produce not even bread? Every day they sink deeper into debt. I prefer to eat honest food."

"You mistake, my man! I have no debts!" cried Aunt Seréna, with trembling lips.

"But, Aunt Seréna, he does not mean that," said Johannes, as much moved as herself.

"Children must be silent, here!" cried the dominie, angrily.

"If the children are silent here, who is there to speak sense?" continued Markus. And then, with a gentle, penetrating voice, he addressed Aunt Seréna. "Whoever will not listen to children, the Father will not understand. I spoke in metaphor — in a simple way, for simple people. The whole world is a metaphor, and not a simple one. If we do not yet understand such a simple metaphor, then the world must indeed remain a sad riddle."

The dominie held his peace, and smoked fiercely; but Aunt Seréna thought it over, looking in front of her, and said; "All understanding comes through the light of grace."

Markus nodded, kindly. "Yes," said he, "for those who unbolt the shutters and throw open the windows. And the sun will shine even through little windows."

Then he ceased speaking and ate his bread. No one said anything more, unless in a whisper to his next neighbor.

When Markus had eaten he stood up and said: "Thank you. Good night!"

Johannes also stood up, and said anxiously: "Markus, You are not going away?"

"Yes, Johannes. Good-by till we meet again!"

Then he passed silently out of the door, took his cap and coat, and was let out by Daatje. Johannes heard her ask: "How much did you get?" And when Markus said simply: "Twopence," he felt a twinge at his heart. Indoors, no one spoke so long as the creaking of the cart-wheel could be heard. Then the dominie, in a loud tone, and with assumed lightness, said:

"That was a venturesome deed, dear Madam. You ought to be more cautious in future with that altogether too-largely developed philanthropy of yours. That man is known as a very dangerous individual."

Exclamations of astonishment and alarm followed this, and different ladies cried: "Goodness!" "It's a sin!" "Do you know him?"

"Alas, indeed I do!" averred the dominie, with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders. "He is a well-known person — one of those fanatics who incite the people and poison their natures: a nihilist."

"A nihilist!" echoed the ladies, frightened and horrified. Poor Johannes sat listening to Dominie Kraalboom with painful interest. The name "nihilist" did not make him afraid, but such notoriety was a bitter disappointment. It was as if

thereby all the mysterious superiority of his beloved friend had been leveled. Had it, then, all been a fraud?

When the circle had taken their leave, and Aunt Seréna was going to bed, he saw Daatje very carefully counting the silver spoons!

IX

"LISTEN, Juffrouw," said Daatje, the following morning, when all was ready for going to church, "for forty years I have served you faithfully and well; but I just want to say to you, that if you bring any more heathen or Hottentots into the house — into the parlor, rather — in the future, I will leave in a jiffy, as sure as fate!"

"Will you, Daatje?" said Aunt Seréna, drily, asking for her prayer-book. Johannes sat stiffly in his Sunday collar, struggling to draw his thread gloves smoothly over his finger-tips. Then, under two umbrellas, the three set out for church.

Already Dominie Kraalboom was sitting in the chancel, busily stroking his freshly shaven cheeks, and thoughtfully watching the coming in of his flock. Not one of the circle was missing. The clothing of the congregation, wet with rain, gave out a peculiar odor; chairs were noisily shoved about over the flat, blue tombstones, while above the sound of shuffling feet and of slamming doors the deep throbbing of the organ was heard.

The dominie soon caught sight of Johannes; and the little man had cause to feel conceited by reason of all the attention paid him. Johannes said to himself that it certainly must be his own imagining (for what could such a great man have to do with a little boy?) but it appeared as if the entire sermon was written for, and especially aimed at, Johannes.

The text was: "Who shall understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

The dominie dwelt upon the sin of arrogance, and the numbers of young people who were wrecked through it ere they rightly understood what it was, and said that they ought to desire to be cleansed from it.

Young people, said the dominie, were conceited and presumptuous, and full of evil; but they were themselves

unconscious of it. They thought they knew more than their elders, and they listened, far too willingly, to pernicious dogmas that would make all men equal — that would reason away royal and divine authority, and that made people rebellious, and discontented with the sphere in which God had placed them.

"The true Christian," said the dominie, "cares for neither gold nor goods. He has higher aspirations. If he be blessed with them, let him manage them well, for they are only lent to him. If he be poor, then let him not repine nor complain, knowing that everything is ordered for the best, and that true riches are not of this world."

It was a fine sermon. Johannes and his aunt both listened attentively. The precentor looked pleased, and the saintly Koos nodded repeatedly. Neeltje, alone, slept; but, as everybody knew, that was because of her nervous trouble.

The entire congregation joined spiritedly in the singing, and the dominie sat down visibly self-satisfied.

Once, Johannes looked around, and, close by the door, athwart the chancel in the shadow, beheld, supported by a slender hand, a bowed head with dark hair!

He knew the hand well, and recognized instantly that dark-haired man. Again and again he felt constrained to look in that direction. The figure remained sitting, motionless, and in a bowed posture.

But when the singing came to an end, and the dominie deliberately made ready to continue his sermon. . . . Surely, the dark head was lifted up! Markus regarded the faces about him for an instant, with a sorrowful look, and then he stood erect.

Johannes' heart began to thump. "Was he going away? What was he going to do? Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

But Markus, taking advantage of that pause wherein the people in a congregation are wont to cough, to make use of their handkerchiefs, and to compose themselves again for listening, began speaking in his gentle, musical voice:

"My friends, excuse me for addressing you unbidden, but you know that it is always permitted to bear witness of the Father, if one can do so truthfully."

In perplexity, the congregation looked from the speaker to Dominie Kraalboom. The precentor, also, directed his frightened eyes to the chancel up behind him, as if expecting from that quarter deliverance from this extraordinary difficulty.

Dominie Kraalboom grew very red, and, speaking in his most impressive tones — rolling his *r*'s, for he was really angry — he said: "I beseech you not to disturb the order of this church."

Markus, however, paid not the slightest attention to these words. His voice rang clearer than ever through the chill, lofty spaces. The people listened, and the dominie had no alternative but to be silent or to shout the louder, which latter expedient he renounced from a sense of dignity.

"My poor friends," said Markus, "does it not alarm you that there are wrong-doings of which you are not conscious? Is it not sad to be guilty and not to know it?"

"If we, poor souls, forgive those who unconsciously wrong us, will not our Father forgive us?"

"But to wander is to wander, and not to follow the straight course: and he who errs, though he may know it not, does not do right, although he may intend a thousand times to do the right.

"And he who continues to wander gets lost; for the Father's justice is inalterable and unfailing.

"And yet, my poor friends, the Father's forgiveness is for every one, even the poorest wanderer. His mercy is for all.

"And His forgiveness is called knowledge, and the name of His mercy is insight.

"These are bestowed upon every one who does not reject them; and no one will be lost who makes use of them.

"Therefore, the Psalmist begged to be cleansed from secret faults. He knew that we know not ourselves how very guilty

we are. And He knew that the enlightening and purifying fire of confession is of the Father's mercy.

"Has ever a thirsty one continued to wander away from the water, after recognizing his mistake?

"Who of us does not long for forgiveness and blessedness? Or who would continue to err after confession?

"Confess, then, and will to look within. It is never too late to do so.

"We are guilty, my poor friends: confess it and there will be forgiveness, but not without knowledge thereof. The least among you can understand this, if only he will.

"It was not the Father who willed that you should be poor, and rich — the poor laboring, the rich idling. It would be abominable blasphemy to say that. Believe it not. Shun as defiling those who would thus delude you.

"Not by divine ordering, but through human mismanagement, wickedness, and foolishness, and the wandering away from the Father's will, have poverty and riches come into this human world.

"Acknowledge it; for, truly, there will be no forgiveness for those who reject the Father's mercy."

Here Dominie Kraalboom beckoned to the sexton and the precentor, who were standing together whispering with considerable vehemence, casting furious looks at the speaker. The sexton coughed and mounted the pulpit. The dominie exchanged a few words with him, and, with a resigned air, half-closed eyes, and a face as severe as possible, went to resume his seat. The sexton strode resolutely through the church, and left the building, all eyes following him in suspense.

Imperturbably, Markus proceeded:

"My poor friends, did ever an artist create a grand masterpiece, and desire that no one should admire it?

"Would the Father, then, have made the mountains, seas, and flowers, gold and jewels, and have desired that we should despise and reject them all?

"No; the highest good belongs not to this world, and neither does the beauty of the universe belong to this world. Yet even here — upon this earth — we may learn to know and to admire; for why else were we placed in this world?"

"Let us admire not the mere wood and strings, but the music of them; not paint and canvas, but the eternal beauty to which they do homage.

"So we shall love the world, and admire it only as that by means of which the Father speaks to us; and whoever despises the world despises the voice of the Father.

"Will not he who receives a letter from his distant love kiss the dry paper, and wet the black ink with his tears?"

"Shall we, then, hate the world, through which alone, in our alienation, the Father reveals to us his beauty?"

Markus' voice was so deep-toned, and so sweet to hear, that many listeners were moved, even although they only half understood. Tears were streaming freely from Johannes' shining, wide-open eyes. Aunt Seréna, too, looked agitated, and Neeltje, even, had waked up. The dominie scowled blackly, with closed eyes, like one about to lose his forbearance. The precentor looked nervously toward the door.

Again Markus began:

"My friends, how shall the poor, who compulsorily toil, and the rich, who compel them, comprehend the sacred message of the Father?"

"Must they always remain both deaf and blind to what is best and most beautiful? Must they see and hear nothing of this?"

"Sooner can the sunlight penetrate dungeon-doors of three-fold thickness, than can the light of the Father's loving kindness and the radiance of His beauty enter the soul of the stupefied drudge.

"Upon the sands of the sea grow neither grapes nor roses. In the heart of the overworked, needy sufferer grows neither beauty nor wisdom.

"And the rich — who purloin the good things which the

Father has given to others — who are served, without rendering service — who eat, without working, and found their houses upon the misery of others — how can these comprehend the justice of the Father?

“Exceeding sweetness shall turn to gall in the rich man’s stomach; illicit pleasure shall waste him away like sorrow; wisdom, unrighteously acquired, shall turn in him to despair and madness.

“The rich man is like one who takes away the fire of many others, that he may always keep himself warm; but the heat consumes him. He will have all the water, that he may never again thirst; but he is drowned. Yet unto all the Father has given light and water in equal measure.

“No one escapes the Father’s justice. The rich have their reward as they go; and in want shall they envy those whom they robbed while they were still upon earth.

“Admit, then, my poor friends, that it is not the Father’s will that there should be poverty and riches, but that your own wickedness and maliciousness have created them — your unbrotherliness and ignorance, your thirst for power and your servility.

“Confess, and there shall be forgiveness for the most guilty. Submit and humble yourselves, and you shall be exalted. Lift up your hearts, fear not, and you shall be saved. Throw open the windows and the light will stream in.”

At last, there was a creaking of the heavy, outside door, which was held shut by a rope, weighted with lead. Then followed several more long-drawn creakings of the pulley, ere the door closed with a dull thud. All heads were again turned in that direction. The dominie, too, looked up, visibly relieved.

And Johannes, stiff with terror, saw, in the rear of the sexton, two officers — two common, insignificant policemen — step up to Markus with an air of professional sternness, albeit with a rather slouching mien.

Yes, it was going to happen! The congregation looked on

in breathless suspense. The sexton bristled, and the officers hesitatingly prepared themselves for a struggle.

But before the outstretched hand of the helmeted chief had descended upon his shoulder, Markus looked round and nodded in a friendly way as if he was expecting them. After that, he looked about the congregation once again, and bade them farewell with a cordial, comforting gesture which seemed to come to all as a surprise. He had the appearance, indeed, of one who was being conducted by two lackeys to a feast, instead of by policemen to the station.

When he went away, the officers grasped him by his arms, as firmly as if they were resolutely determined not to let him escape. They did this so awkwardly, and Markus was so cheerfully docile, that the effect was very comical, and several people smiled.

The dominie spoke a few more words, and made a long closing prayer which, however, was not listened to attentively. The congregation were too anxious to talk over what had happened. And they made a busy beginning even before they were out of the church.

But Aunt Seréna and Johannes went home with averted eyes, and in anxious silence, without exchanging a word or a look.

X

JOHANNES had one peculiarity which he could not excuse in himself. His good intentions and heroic resolves always came, according to his own opinion, a trifle too late. He might be a good boy yet, he thought, if only things did not happen so suddenly that he had not due time to think them over before he needed to act. Thus, sitting on the opposite side of the breakfast table from his Aunt Seréna, deliberating whether it would still be proper, after the agitating events of the morning, to spread his first roll, as usual, with sweet-milk cheese, and his second with Deventer cake, it suddenly dawned upon him what a mean, cowardly, perfidious boy he had been. He felt that any other brisk, faithful person in his place would have risen up instantly, and resisted with all his power of word and deed that shameful outrage against his beloved brother.

Of course, there had been something for him to do! He ought to have intervened, instead of walking home again with Aunt Seréna, as calmly and serenely as if he were not in the least concerned. How was it possible — how *could* it be possible, that he only now perceived this? He might not, perhaps, have accomplished anything; but that was not the question. Was it not his dearest friend who was concerned; and had he not, like a coward, left him alone? Was not that friend now sitting among thieves in a musty pen, enduring the insolence of policemen, while he himself was here in Aunt Seréna's fine house, calmly drinking his coffee?

That must not be. He felt very sure of it, now. And since Johannes, as I have already remarked, was never afraid to do a thing if he was only first sure about it, not only the cake and cheese, but even the rolls and coffee, remained untouched. He suddenly stood up and said:

"Aunt Seréna!"

"What is it, my boy?"

"I want to go!"

Aunt Seréna threw back her head, that she might give him a good look through her spectacles. Her face took on a very grieved expression.

At last, after a long pause, she asked, in her gentle voice, "What do you mean?"

"I want to go away. I cannot stand it. I want to be with my friend."

"Do you think he will take better care of you than I do, Johannes?"

"I do not believe that, Aunt Seréna, but he is being treated unfairly. He is in the right."

"I will not take it upon myself . . ." said Aunt Seréna, hesitating, "to say that he is wrong. I am not clever enough for that. I am only an old woman, and have not studied much, although I have thought and experienced a great deal. I will readily admit that perhaps I was at fault without knowing it. I did my best, to the best of my belief. But how many there are, better than I am, Johannes, who think your friend in the wrong!"

"Are they also better than he is?" asked Johannes.

"Who can say? How long have you known this friend — and whom of the people have you known besides? But although your friend were right, how would it help me, and what would it matter to me? Must I, in my sixty-fourth year, give away all that I have, and go out house-cleaning? Do you mean that I ought to do that, Johannes?"

Johannes was perplexed. "I do not say that, dear Aunt Seréna."

"But, what do you say, then? And what do you want of me?"

Johannes was silent.

"You see, Johannes . . ." continued Aunt Seréna, with a break in her voice — not looking at him now, but staring hard at her coffee-tray — "I never have had any children, and all the people whom I have been very fond of are either dead or

gone away. My friends do, indeed, show me much cordiality. On my birthday I had forty-four calls, two hundred and eleven cards and notes, and about fifty presents; but that, however, is not for me true life. The life of the old is so barren if no young are growing near. I have not complained about it, and have submitted to God's will. But since . . . for a few months . . . you . . . I thought it a blessing — a dispensation from God . . .”

Aunt Seréna's voice grew so broken and hoarse that she stopped speaking, and began to rummage in her work-basket.

Johannes felt very tenderly toward her, but it seemed to him as if, in two seconds, he had become much older and wiser; yes, as if he had even grown, visibly, and was taller than a moment before. Never yet had he spoken with such dignity.

“My dear Aunt, I really am not ungrateful. I think you are good. More than almost any other you have been kind to me. But yet I must go. My conscience tells me so. I would be willing to stay, you see; but still I am going because it is best. If you say, ‘You must not,’ then I cannot help it; I think, though, that I will quietly run away. I am truly sorry to cause you sadness, but you will soon hear of an — another boy, or a girl, who will make you happier. I must find my friend — my conscience tells me so. Are you going to say, Aunt Seréna, that I must not?”

Aunt Seréna had taken out her worsted work, and appeared to be comparing colors. Then, very slowly, she replied:

“No, I shall not say that, my dear boy; at least, if you have thought it all over well.”

“I have, Aunt Seréna,” said Johannes.

Being deeply anxious, he wished to go instantly to learn where Markus had been taken. After that he would return to “Vrede-best.”

He mounted the stone steps of the police station with dread and distaste. The officers, who were sitting outside on chairs,

received him, according to their wont, with scant courtesy. The chief eyed Johannes, after the latter's bashful inquiry, with a scornful expression, which seemed to say: "What business is it of yours, and where have I seen you before?"

Johannes learned, however, that "the prisoner" had been set free. What use he had made of his freedom Johannes must find out for himself.

As he could give no other reason for his interest in the prisoner than that he was his friend, and as this reason was not enough to exalt him in the esteem of police authority, none of the functionaries felt called upon to put him on the track. They supposed that the scissors-grinder had very likely gone back to the Fair. That was all the help they gave.

Johannes returned to his aunt's baffled and in dismay. There, happily, he found relief; for the good aunt had already discovered that Markus had been led out of the town, and that, with his cart, he had taken the road to Utrecht. Already, lying in plain sight, he saw a large, old-fashioned satchel of hairy leather (a sort of bag which could be hung about one), full of neatly packed sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs. And in the inside of a waistcoat Aunt Seréna had sewed a small pocket. Within that pocket was a purse containing five little gold-pieces.

"I do not give you more, Johannes, for by the time this is gone you will surely know if you really wish to stay away for good or to come back again. Do not be ashamed to return. I will not say anything to you about it."

"I will be honest, and give it back to you when I have earned it," said Johannes. He spoke in sober earnest; but he had, no more than had his aunt, any clear expectation that it would be possible.

Johannes took just a run into the garden to say good-by to his favorite places — his paths and his flowers. Swiftly and shyly, so as not to be seen, he ran past the kitchen where Daatje, loudly singing hymns the while, stood chopping

spinach. After that, he embraced Aunt Seréna in the vestibule for the first and for the last time. "Cuckool Cuckool!" came insultingly and triumphantly from the little trap-door, as the clock struck two. Then the stately green front door closed between him and Aunt Seréna.

That was a painful moment; yet there quickly followed in Johannes' heart a delightful glow — a feeling of freedom such as he had never yet known. He almost felt himself a man. He had extricated himself from soft and perilous ways; he was going out into the wide world; he would find his beloved brother again; he had a bagful of rolls, and in his waistcoat were five gold-pieces. These last were only lent to him; he would earn as much, and give them back again.

It was a still, humid, August day, and Johannes, full of gladness, saw his beautiful native land lying in white light under a canopy of delicate grey. He saw thickly wooded dikes, black and white cattle, and brown boats in water without a ripple. He walked briskly, inquiring everywhere for Markus the scissors-grinder. In front of an inn, not far from the city, sat three little gentlemen. They were apparently government or post-office clerks, who had taken their midday stroll and their glass of bitters.

Johannes asked information of the waiter who brought drinks, but received no answer.

One of the little dandies, who had heard his question, said to his companions:

"Jerusalem! but did you chaps hear that kicker? The fellow went into the new church yesterday morning, and talked back at the dominie."

"What fellow?" asked the others.

"Good Lord! Don't you know him? That half-lunny fellow with the black curly-pate? He does that now and then."

"Gee! That's rich. And what did the dominie say?"

"Well, he found it no joke, for the fellow knew all about

it — as darned well as he did himself. But the gypsy had his trouble for his pains; for that time the dominie wouldn't have anything to do with such a dirty competitor!"

And the three friends laughed at the top of their voices.

"How did it end?"

"He had him walked clean out of the church, by the sexton and two cops."

"That's confounded silly. 'Twould have been better to see who could crow the loudest. It's the loudest cock that wins."

"The idea! You'd have me believe you mean it? Suppose they gave the prize to the wrong fellow?"

"Whether you are cheated by a fool of a preacher, or by a scissors-grinder, what's the difference?"

Johannes reflected a moment and wondered if it would not be commendable to do what he ached to do — fly at these people and rain blows upon their heads. But he controlled himself and passed on, convinced that in doing so he was escaping some hard work.

For five hours he walked on without being much the wiser for his inquiries. Some people thought they had seen Markus; others knew positively nothing about him.

Johannes began to fear he had passed him; for by this time he ought to have overtaken him.

It began to grow dark, and before him lay a wide river which he must cross by means of a ferry-boat. On the farther side were hills covered with an underwood of oak, and tall, purple-flowered heather.

The ferryman was positive that he had not that day taken over a scissors-grinder; but in yonder town, an hour's distance from the river, a Fair was to begin in the morning. Very likely Markus also would be there.

Johannes sat down by the roadside in the midst of the dark broom, with its millions of small purple flowers. The setting sun cast a glorious coloring over land and mist, and over the lustrous, flowing water. He was tired but not depressed, and he ate his bread contentedly, certain that he should find Markus.

The road had become quiet and lonely. It was fun to be so free — so alone and independent — at home in the open country. Rather than anywhere else he should like to sleep out-of-doors — in the underwood.

But just as he was about to lay himself down, he saw the figure of a man with his hands in his pockets, and his cap pushed back. Johannes sat up, and waited until he came closer. Then he recognized him.

"Good evening, Director!" said Johannes.

"Good evening to you, my friend!" returned the other. "What are you doing here? Are you lost?"

"No; I am looking for friends. Is Markus with you?"

The man was the director of a Flea-Theatre; a little fellow, with a husky voice, and eyes inflamed by his fine work.

"Markus? I'm not sure. But come along — there's no knowing but he might be there."

"Are you looking for new apprentices?" asked Johannes.

"Do you happen to have any? They're worth a pretty penny, you know!"

They walked together to the camp of gypsy wagons, near the town. Johannes found there all the old acquaintances. There was the fat lady, who could rest a plate upon her bosom and thus eat out of it. Now, however, she was eating simply from a box, like the others, because there were no spectators. There were the mother and daughter who represented the living mermaid, taking turns because one could not hold out very long. There was the exhibitor of the collection of curiosities — a poor, humpbacked knave whose entire possessions consisted of a stuffed alligator, a walrus-tooth, and a seven-months baby preserved in alcohol. There were the two wild men, who, growling horribly, could eat grass and live rabbits, and who might come out of the wagon only at night, when the street boys were away; but who, far from savage now, were sitting in the light of a flickering lantern, "shaving" one another with exceedingly dirty cards.

The flea-tamer brought Johannes at last to Marjon's wagon.

"Bless me!" cried Lorum, who seemed to be in a good humor as he sat by the road smoking his pipe. "Here is our runaway young gentleman again! Now the girls will be glad!"

From behind the wagon came the soft tones of a voice, singing to a zither accompaniment. Johannes could hear the song distinctly, in the dreamlike stillness of the hour. It was sung in a whining, melancholy, street-organ style, but with unusual emotion:

"They have broken my heart —
Ah, the tears I have shed!
They have torn us apart —
His dear voice is now dead.
Alas! Alas!
How could you forsake me?
Alas! Alas!
How you have deceived me!"

It was a ditty that Johannes thought he had often heard the nurse-maids sing. But, because he recognized that dear voice, and perhaps even because he was worried over the applicability to himself, he was greatly touched by it.

"Hey, there!" cried Lorum to one behind him. "The kid has come back! Stop your squalling!"

Then Marjon appeared from behind the wagon, and ran up to Johannes. Also, the door of the wagon flew back, and Johannes saw Marjon's sister standing in the bright opening. Her fat arms were bare, and she was in her night-gown.

XI

SINCE that first night in the dunes with Windekind, Johannes had slept many a time in the open air, and he did not see why he should not now do so. He would lie down under the wagon, upon some hay. He was tired, and so would sleep well.

But sleep did not come to him very promptly. Adventures in the world of people proved to be even more exciting than those in Windekind's land of elves. He was full of the important and unusual situation in which he was placed; the strange human life that surrounded him claimed his attention. Above him, feet were shuffling over the wagon floor, and he could see the people crawling around one another inside the warm, dirty wagons. He was obliged to listen to the talking, singing, laughing and quarreling that frequently broke out here and there. A solitary ocarina continued to whistle awhile; then all was still.

It grew cold. He had with him only a thin cloak of Aunt Seréna's; and, as a horse-blanket could not be spared, he found a couple of empty oat-bags; but they were too short.

When all were asleep, and he was still lying awake, shivering, his spirits already inclined to droop, he heard the door of the wagon open. A voice called him, in a whisper. Johannes scrambled out into sight, and recognized Marjon's dark sister.

"Why don't you come in here, Kiddie?" she asked.

The truth was that Johannes, above all else, feared the closeness and the fleas. But he would not offer these insulting reasons, so he replied — intending to be very courteous and praiseworthy: "But that would not do for me — to be with you!"

Now, formality is not a very strong point in a house-wagon. In the very stateliest, a curtain does indeed sometimes define

two sleeping-rooms at night, thus denoting regard for the proprieties. But in most cases the custom is to do as do the birds which change their suits but once a year, and not too much, at that; and as do the mice which also have no separate bedrooms.

"Aw! Come, Boy! You're silly. Just come on! It's all right."

And when Johannes, perplexed and very bashful, hesitated, he felt a fat, heavy arm around his neck, and a soft, broad, cold mouth upon his cheek.

"Come on, Youngster! Don't be afraid. Surely you are not so green! Hey? It's time for me to make you wiser."

Now there was nothing Johannes had learned more to value than wisdom, and he never willingly neglected a chance of becoming wiser. But this time there came to him a very clear idea of the existence of an undesirable wisdom.

He had no time to deliberate over this wonderful discovery; for, happily, there came to the help of his immature thoughts a very strong feeling of aversion, so that for once he knew betimes what he ought to do.

He said loudly, and firmly: "I will not! I rest better here." And he crept back under the wagon. The swarthy jade appeared not to like that, for she uttered an oath as she turned away, and said: "Clear out, then!" Johannes did not take it greatly to heart, although it did appear to him unfair. He slept, however, no more than before; and the sensation of the recent touches, and the wretched odor of poor perfumery which the woman had brought with her, remained with him, to his distress.

As soon as it began to grow light, the door of the wagon was again opened. Johannes, surprised, looked up. Marjon came softly out in her bare feet, with an old purple shawl thrown over her thin little shoulders. She went up to Johannes and sat down on the ground beside him.

"What did she do?" she asked, in a whisper.

"Who?" asked Johannes, in return. But that was from embarrassment, for he well knew whom she meant.

"Now, you know well enough. Did you think I was sleeping? Did she give you a kiss?"

Johannes nodded.

"Where? On your mouth?"

"No. On my cheek."

"Thank God!" said Marjon. "You will not let her do it again? She is a common thing!"

"I could not help it," said Johannes.

Marjon looked at him thoughtfully a few moments, with her clear, light grey eyes.

"Do you dare steal?" she asked then, abruptly.

"No," said Johannes. "I dare to, but it's wrong."

"Indeed it isn't!" said Marjon, very emphatically. "Indeed, it is not! It's only a question of who from. Stealing from one another is mean, but from the public is allowable. I must not steal from that woman any more than from Lorum. But *you* may steal from the huzzy, if you only dared."

"Then can you steal from me, too?" asked Johannes. Marjon looked at him in sudden surprise, and gave a pretty laugh, showing her white, even teeth.

"A while ago I could, but not now. Now you belong to me. But that woman has a lot of money and you have not."

"I have some money, too — fifty guildens. Aunt Seréna gave it to me."

Marjon drew in the air with her lips as if sipping something delicious. Her pale face shone with pleasure.

"Five little golden Teners! Is it truly so? But, Johannes, then we are well off! We'll have a good time with them. Shan't we?"

"To be sure," assented Johannes, recovering himself. "But I want to find Markus."

"That's good," said Marjon. "That's the best thing to do. We'll both go looking for him."

"Right away?" asked Johannes.

"No, you stupid! We should be nabbed in no time. We'll

start in the evening. Then, during the night, we can get a good way off. I'll give you the signal."

It was morning — clear and cool, yet growing warmer with the early August sunshine. Everywhere over the dark heather the dew-covered cobwebs were shining like clusters of sparkling stars. The fires of the foregoing evening were still smouldering in the camp; and there was a smell of wood coals and of honey.

Johannes was well pleased. There was a glowing little flame also within himself. He felt that it was good to be alive, and a joy to strive. It was a long, strange day, but he was patient and happy in the thought of fleeing with Marjon. The dark woman was friendly toward him again. He was helping her in the circus the entire day, and had no chance to speak with Marjon. But now and then they gave each other a look full of complete understanding. That was delightful! Never before in his every-day life had Johannes experienced anything so delightful.

That evening there was an exhibition, and Marjon performed her tricks. Johannes felt very proud and important because he belonged to the troupe, and was looked upon by the public as an athlete or an equestrian. He might stand, in topboots and with a whip, at the entrance to the stall, but he must not perform a single trick, nor once crack his whip.

When it was good and dark, and everybody was asleep again, Marjon came to summon him. He could scarcely distinguish her figure; but he knew by a soft, grunting sound, that she carried Kees, her monkey, on her arm. She thrust her guitar into Johannes' hand, and said in a low tone: "Move on, now!"

They set out hastily and in silence, Marjon taking the lead. First they went by the highway; then they took a footpath along the river; and then, at a ferry, they softly unfastened a small boat, and pushed out into the current.

"Keep your wits about you, Jo, and be on the lookout!"

"We shall be overtaken," said Johannes, not quite at his ease.

"Are you afraid?"

"No, not afraid," said Johannes, although the truth was that he was trying not to be; "but where are we going to bring up? And how can we keep out of the way if a boat should come along? We have no oars!"

"I wish a boat *would* come. Then we'd go on with it."

"Where do you want to go, Marjon?"

"Well, over the frontier, of course. Otherwise they'll catch us."

"But Markus!"

"We'll find him, by and by — only come on now."

In silence the two children drifted out over the still, black water, which here and there bubbled past a floating log, or a barrel. Everything was mysterious. It was pitch dark, and there was no wind. The reeds, even, scarcely sighed. Keesje whined, complainingly, not liking the cold.

"But who is Markus, Marjon? Do you know?"

"You must not ask that, Jo. You must trust him. I do."

Then they heard a dull, fitfully throbbing sound that slowly drew nearer from the distance, and Johannes saw red and white lanterns ahead of them.

"A steamboat!" he cried. "What are we going to do now?"

"Sing!" said Marjon, without a moment's hesitation.

The boat came very gradually, and Johannes saw in the rear of her a long file of little lights, like a train of twinkling stars. It was a steam-tug with a heavy draught of Rhine-boats. It seemed to be panting and toiling with its burden, against the powerful current.

They stayed a boat's length away from the tug, but its long, unwieldy train — swinging out in a great curve at the rear — came nearer and nearer.

Marjon took her guitar and began to sing, and suddenly, with the sound of lapping water and throbbing engines, the music was ringing out in the still night — exquisite and clear. She sang a well-known German air, but with the following words:

“Tho’ on dark depths of waters
I fear not and am strong,
For I know who will guard me
And guide me all life long.”

“Are you tipsy, there, or tired of life? What do you put yourself across the channel for — and without a light?” rang out over the water from one of the vessels.

“Help! Throw a line!” cried Marjon.

“Help! help!” cried Johannes, after her.

Then a rope came wabbling across their oarless craft. By good luck Johannes caught it, and pulled himself, hand over hand, up to the vessel. The helmsman, standing beside the great, high-arched rudder, looked overboard, with a lantern in his hand.

“What wedding do you hail from?”

Johannes and Marjon climbed into the boat and Marjon pushed off their own little shallop.

“Two boys!” exclaimed the helmsman.

“And a monkey!” subjoined Marjon.

Johannes looked round at her. By the light of the lantern he saw a little figure that he hardly recognized — a slip of a boy wearing a cap on his closely cropped head. She had sacrificed for the flight her silky blonde hair. Keesje’s head was sticking up out of her jacket, and he was blinking briskly in the glare of the lantern.

“Oh, that’s it! Fair-folk!” grumbled the skipper. “What’s to become of that boat?”

“It knows the way home!” said Marjon.

XII

I WILL simply tell you, without delay, in order that you may be able to read what follows in peace of mind, that Johannes and Marjon became husband and wife ere the ending of the story. But at the time the old skipper pointed out to them a comfortable sleeping-corner in the deck-house of the long Rhine-boat, they had not the least idea of it. Being very tired, they were soon lying, like two brothers, in deep sleep, with Keesje, now warm and contented, between them.

When it grew light, the whole world seemed to have vanished. Johannes had been wakened by the rattling of the anchor-chains, and when he looked out, he saw on all sides nothing but white, foggy light; no sky, no shore — only, just under the little windows, the yellow river current. But he heard the striking of the town clocks, and even the crowing of cocks. Therefore the world was still there, as fine as ever, only hidden away under a thick white veil.

The boats lay still, for they could not be navigated. So long as the waters of the Rhine could not be seen frothing about the anchor-chains, so long must they wait for a chance to know the points of the compass. Thus they remained for hours in the still, thick white light, listening to the muffled sounds of the town coming from the shore.

The two children ran back and forth over the long, long vessel, and had a fine time. They had already become good friends of the skipper, especially since he had learned that they could pay for their passage. They ate their bread and sausage, peering into the fog in suspense, for fear that Lorum and the dark woman might be coming in a boat to overtake them. They knew that they could not yet be very far away from their last camping-place.

At last the mists grew thinner and thinner, and fled from before the shining face of the sun; and, although the earth still

remained hidden beneath swirling white, up above began to appear the glorious blue.

And this was the beginning of a fine day for Johannes.

Sighing and groaning, as if with great reluctance, the tug-boat began again its toilsome course up the stream. The still, summer day was warm, the wide expanse of water sparkled in the sun, and on both sides the shores were gliding gently by — their grey-green reeds, and willows and poplars, all fresh and dewy, peeping through the fog.

Johannes lay on the deck, gazing at land and water, while Marjon sat beside him. Keesje amused himself with the tackle rope, chuckling with satisfaction every now and then, as he sprang back and forth, with a serious look, after a flitting bird or insect.

"Marjon," said Johannes, "how did you know so certainly yesterday that there was nothing to be afraid of?"

"Some one watches over me," said Marjon.

"Who?" asked Johannes.

"Father."

Johannes looked at her, and asked, softly:

"Do you mean your own father?"

But Marjon made a slight movement of her head toward the green earth, the flowing water, the blue sky and the sunshine, and said, with peculiar significance, as if now it was quite clear to her:

"No! I mean The Father."

"The Father Markus speaks about?"

"Yes. Of course," said Marjon.

Johannes was silent a while, gazing at the rapid flow of the water, and the slower and slower course of things according to their distance in the rear. His head was full of ideas, each one eager for utterance. But it is delightful to lie thus and view a passing country spread out under the clear light — letting the thoughts come very calmly, and selecting carefully those worthy of being clad in speech. Many are too tender and sensitive to be accorded that honor, but yet they may not be meanest ones.

Johannes first selected a stray thought.

"Is that your own idea?" he asked. Marjon was not quick with an answer, herself, this time.

"My own? No. Markus told me it. But I knew it myself, though. I knew it, but he said it. He drew it out of me. I remember everything he says — everything — even although I don't catch on."

"Is there any good in that?" asked Johannes, thoughtlessly.

Marjon looked at him disdainfully, and said:

"Jimminy! You're just like Kees. He doesn't know either that he can do more with a quarter than with a cent. When I got my first quarter, I didn't catch on, either, but then I noticed that I could get a lot more candy with it than with a cent. Then I knew better what to do. So now I treasure the things Markus has said — all of them."

"Do you think as much of him as I do?" asked Johannes.

"More," said Marjon.

"That cannot be."

Then there was another long pause. The boat was not in a hurry, neither was the sun, and the broad stream made even less haste. And so the children, as well, took plenty of time in their talking.

"Yes, but you see," Johannes began again, "when people speak of our Father, they mean God, and God is . . ."

What was it again, that Windekind had said about God? The thought came to him, and clothed in the old terms. But Johannes hesitated. The terms were surely not attractive.

"What is God, now?" asked Marjon.

The old jargon must be used. There was nothing better.

" . . . An oil-lamp, where the flies stick fast."

Marjon whistled — a shrill whistle of authority — a circus-command. Keesje, who was sitting on the foremast, thoughtfully inspecting his outstretched hind foot, started up at once, and came sliding down the steel cable, in dutiful haste.

"Here, Kees! Attention!"

Kees grumbled assent, and was instantly on the alert, for

he was well drilled. His sharp little brown eyes scarcely strayed for one second away from the face of his mistress.

"The young gentleman here says he knows what God is. Do you know?"

Keesje shook his head quickly, showing all his sharp little white teeth in a grin. One would have said he was laughing, but his small eyes peered as seriously as ever from Marjon's mouth to her hand. There was nothing to laugh at. He must pay attention. That was clear. Goodies were bound to follow — or blows.

But Marjon laughed loudly.

"Here, Kees! Good Kees!"

And then he had the dainties, and soon was up on the mast, smacking aloud as he feasted.

The result of this affront was quite unexpected to Marjon. Johannes, who had been lying prone on the deck, with his chin in his hands, gazed sadly for a while at the horizon, and then hid his face in his folded arms, his body shaking with sobs.

"Stop now, Jo; you're silly! Cry for *that*!" said Marjon, half frightened, trying to pull his arms away from his face. But Johannes shook his head.

"Hush! Let me think," said he.

Marjon gave him about a quarter of an hour, and then she spoke, gently and kindly, as if to comfort him:

"I know what you wanted to say, dear Jo. That's the reason, too, why I always speak of The Father. I understand that the best; because, you see, I never knew my earthly father, but he must have been much better than other fathers."

"Why?" asked Johannes.

"Because I am much better than all those people round about me, and better than that common, dark woman who had another father."

Marjon said this quite simply, thinking it to be so. She said it in a modest manner, while feeling that it was something which ought to be spoken.

"Not that I have been so very good. Oh, no! But yet I

have been better than the others, and that was because of the father; for my mother, too, was only a member of a troupe. And now it is so lovely that I can say 'Father' just as Markus does!"

Johannes looked at her, with the sadness still in his eyes.

"Yes, but all the meanness, the ugliness, and the sorrow that our Father permits! First, He launches us into the world, helpless and ignorant, without telling us anything. And then, when we do wrong because we know no better, we are punished, Is that fatherly?"

But Marjon said:

"Did you fancy it was not? Kees gets punished, too, so he will learn. And now that he is clever and well taught he gets hardly any blows — only tid-bits. Isn't that so, Kees?"

"But, Marjon, did you not tell me how you found Kees — shy, thin, and mangy — his coat all spoiled with hunger and beatings; and how he has remained timid ever since, because a couple of rascally boys had mistreated him?"

Marjon nodded, and said:

"There are rascals, and deucedly wicked boys, and very likely there is a Devil, also; but I am my Father's child and not afraid of Him, nor what He may do with me."

"But if He makes you ill, and lets you be ill-treated? If He lets you do wrong, and then leaves you to cry about it? And if He makes you foolish?"

Keesje was coming down from the mast, very softly and deliberately. With his black, dirty little hands he cautiously and hesitatingly touched the boy's clothes that Marjon was wearing. He wanted to go to sleep, and had been used to a soft lap. But his mistress took him up, and hid him in her jacket. Then he yawned contentedly, like a little old man, and closed his pale eyelids in sleep — his little face looking very pious with its eyebrows raised in a saintly arch. Marjon said:

"If I should go and ill-treat Keesje, he would make a great fuss about it, but still he would stay with me."

"Yes; but he would do the same with a common tramp," said Johannes.

Marjon shook her head, doubtfully.

"Kees is rather stupid — much more so than you or I, but yet not altogether stupid. He well knows who means to treat him rightly. He knows well that I do not ill-treat him for my own pleasure. And you see, Jo, I know certainly, *ever* so certainly — that my Father will not ill-treat me without a reason."

Johannes pressed her hand, and asked passionately:

"How do you know that? How do you know?"

Marjon smiled, and gave him a gentle look.

"Exactly as I know you to be a good boy — one who does not lie. I can tell that about you in various ways I could not explain — by one thing and another. So, too, I can see that my Father means well by me. By the flowers, the clouds, the sparkling water. Sometimes it makes me cry — it is so plain."

Then Johannes remembered how he had once been taught to pray, and his troubled thoughts grew calmer. Yet he could not refrain from asking — because he had been so much with Pluizer:

"Why might not that be a cheat?"

Suddenly Keesje waked up and looked behind him at Johannes, in a frightened way.

"Ah, there you are!" exclaimed Marjon, impatiently. "That's exactly as if you asked why the summer might not perchance be the winter. You can ask that, any time. I know my Father just for the very reason that He does not deceive. If Markus was only here he would give it to you!"

"Yes, if he was only here!" repeated Johannes, not appearing to be afraid of what Markus might do to him.

Then in a milder way, Marjon proceeded:

"Do you know what Markus says, Jo? When the Devil stands before God, his heart is pierced by genuine trust."

"Should I trust the Devil, then?" asked Johannes.

"Well, no! How could that be? Nobody can do that."

You must trust the Father alone. But even if you are so unlucky as to see the Devil before you see the Father, that makes no difference, for he has no chance against sincere trust. That upsets his plans, and at the same time pleases the Father."

"Oh, Marjon! Marjon!" said Johannes, clasping his hands together in his deep emotion. She smiled brightly and said:

"Now you see that was a quarter out of my savings-box!"

Really, it was a very happy day for Johannes. He saw great, white, piled-up clouds, tall trees in the light of the rising sun, still houses on the river-banks, and the rushing stream — with violet and gold sparkling in the broad bends — ever flowing through a fruitful, verdant country; and over all, the deep, deep blue — and he whispered: "Father — Father!" In an instant, he suddenly comprehended all the things he saw as splendid, glorious Thoughts of the Father, which had always been his to observe, but only now to be wholly understood. The Father said all this to him, as a solemn admonition that *He* it was — pure and true, eternally guarding, ever waiting and accessible, behind the unlovely and the deceitful.

"Will you always stay with me, Marjon?" he asked earnestly.

"Yes, Jo, that I will. And you with me?"

Then Little Johannes intrepidly gave his promise, as if he really knew what the future held for him, and as if he had power over his entire unknown existence.

"Yes, dear Marjon, I will never leave you again. I promise you. We remain together, but as friends. Do you agree? No foolishness!"

"Very well, Jo. As you like," said Marjon. After that they were very still.

XIII

It was evening, and they were nearing Germany. The dwellings on the river-banks no longer looked fresh and bright colored, but faded and dirty. Then they came to a poor, shabby-looking town, with rusty walls, and grey houses inscribed with flourishing black letters.

The boats went up the stream to lie at anchor, and the custom-house officers came. Then Marjon, rousing up from the brown study into which Johannes' last question had plunged her, said:

"We must sing something, Jo. Only think! Your Aunt's money will soon be gone. We must earn some more."

"Can we do it?" asked Johannes.

"Easy. You just furnish the words and I'll take care of the music. If it isn't so fine at first, that doesn't matter. You'll see how the money rains down, even if they don't understand a thing."

Marjon knew her public. It came out as she said it would. When they began to sing, the brusque customs collectors, the old skipper, and other ships' folk in the boats lying next them, all listened; and the stokers of the little tugboat stuck their soot-begrimed faces out of the machine-room hatch, and they, also, listened. For those two young voices floated softly and harmoniously out over the calmly flowing current, and there was something very winning in the two slender brothers — something fine and striking. They were quite unlike the usual circus-people. There was something about them which instantly made itself felt, even upon a rude audience, although no one there could tell in what it consisted, nor understand what they were singing about, nor even the words.

At first they sang their old songs — *The Song of the Butterfly*, and the melancholy song that Marjon had made alone,

and which Johannes, rather disdainfully, had named *The Nurse-Maid's Song*, and also the one Marjon had composed in the evening, in the boat. But when Marjon said, "You must make something new," Johannes looked very serious, and said:

"You cannot *make* verses—they are born as much as children are."

Marjon blushed; and, laughing in her confusion, she replied: "What silly things you do say, Jo. It's well that the dark woman doesn't hear you. She might take you in hand."

After a moment of silence, she resumed: "I believe you talk trash, Jo. When I make songs the music does come of itself; but I have to finish it off, though. I must *make*—compose, you know. It's exactly," she continued, after a pause, as if a troop of children came in, all unexpected—wild and in disorder, and as if, like a school-teacher, I made them pass in a procession—two by two—and stroked their clothing smooth, and put flowers in their hands, and then set them marching. That's the way I make songs, and so must you make verses. Try now!"

"Exactly," said Johannes; "but yet the children must first come of themselves."

"But are they not all there, Jo?"

Gazing up into the great dome of the evening sky, where the pale stars were just beginning to sparkle, Johannes thought it over. He thought of the fine day he had had, and also of what he had felt coming into his head.

"Really," said Marjon, rather drily, "you'll just have to, whether you want to or not—to keep from starving."

Then, as if desperately alarmed, Johannes went in search of pencil and paper; and truly, in came the disorderly children, and he arranged them in file, pinked them up, and dealt them out flowers.

He first wrote this:

"Tell me what means the bright sunshine,
The great and restless river Rhine,
This teeming land of flocks and herds —
The high, wide blue of summer sky,
Where fleecy clouds in quiet lie.
To catch the lilt of happy birds.

"The Father thinks, and spreads his dream
As sun and heaven, field and stream.
I feast on his creation —
And when that thought is understood,
Then shall my soul confess Him good,
And kneel in adoration."

Marjon read it, and slowly remarked, as she nodded: "Very well, Jo, but I'm afraid I can't make a song of it. At least, not now. I must have something with more life and movement in it. This is too sober — I must have something that dances. Can't you say something about the stars? I just love them so! Or about the river, or the sun, or about the autumn?"

"I will try to," said Johannes, looking up at the twinkling dots sprinkled over the dark night-sky.

Then he composed the following song, for which Marjon quickly furnished a melody, and soon they were both singing:

"One by one from their sable fold
Came the silent stars with twinkling eyes,
And their tiny feet illumed like gold
The adamantine skies.

"And when they'd climbed the domèd height —
So happy and full of glee,
There sang those stars with all their might
A song of jubilee."

It was a success. Their fresh young voices were floating and gliding and intertwining like two bright garlands, or two supple fishes sporting in clear water, or two butterflies fluttering about each other in the sunshine. The brown old skipper grinned, and the grimy-faced stokers looked at them approvingly. They did not understand it, but felt sure it must be a merry love-song. Three times — four times through — the children sang the song. Then, little by little, the night fell. But Johannes had still more to say. The sun, and the splendid summer day that had now taken its leave, had left behind a sweet, sad longing, and this he wanted to put upon paper. Lying stretched out on the deck, he wrote the following, by the light of the lantern:

“Oh, golden sun — oh, summer light,
I would that I might see thee bright
Thro’ long, drear, winter days!
Thy brightest rays have all been shed —
Full soon thy glory will have fled,
And cold winds blow;
While all dear, verdant ways
Lie deep in snow.”

As he read the last line aloud, his voice was full of emotion.

“That’s fine, Jol” said Marjon. “I’ll soon have it ready.”

And after a half-hour of trying and testing, she found for the verses a sweet air, full of yearning.

And they sang it, in the dusk, and repeated the former one, until a troupe of street musicians of the sort called “tooters” came boisterously out of a beer-house on the shore, and drowned their tender voices with a flood of loud, dissonant, and brazen tones.

“Mum, now,” said Marjon, “we can’t do anything against that braying. But never mind. We have two of them now — *The Star Song* and *The Autumn Song*. At this rate we shall get rich. And I’ll make something yet out of *The Father*

Song; but in the morning, I think — not to-night. We've earned at least our day's wages, and we can go on a lark with contented minds. Will you go, Jo?"

"Marjon," said Johannes, musingly, hesitating an instant before he consented, "do you know who Pluizer is?"

"No!" said Marjon, bluntly.

"Do you know what he would say?"

"Well?" asked Marjon, with indifference.

"That you are altogether impossible."

"Impossible? Why?"

"Because you cannot exist, he would say. Such beings do not and cannot exist."

"Oh, he must surely mean that I ought only to steal and swear and drink gin. Is that it? Because I'm a circus-girl, hey?"

"Yes, he would say something like that. And he would also call this about the Father nothing but rot. He says the clouds are only wetness, and the sunshine quiverings, and nothing else; that they could be the expression of anything is humbug."

"Then he would surely say that, too, of a book of music?" asked Marjon.

"That I do not know," replied Johannes, "but he does say that light and darkness are exactly the same thing."

"Oh! Then I know him very well. Doesn't he say, also, that it's the same thing if you stand on your head or on your heels?"

"Exactly — that is he," said Johannes, delighted. "What have you to say about it?"

"That for all I care he can stay standing on his head; and more, too, he can choke!"

"Is that enough?" asked Johannes, somewhat doubtfully.

"Certainly," said Marjon, very positively. "Should I have to tell him that daytimes it is light, and night-times it is dark? But what put you in mind of that Jackanapes?"

"I do not know," said Johannes. "I think it was those tooters."

Then they went into the deck-house where Keesje was already lying on the broad, leather-cushioned settee, all rolled up in a little ball, and softly snoring; and this cabin served the two children as a lodging-house.

XIV

ON the second day they came to the great cathedral which, fortunately, was then not yet complete, and made Johannes think of a magnificent, scrag-covered cliff. And when he heard that it was really going to be completed, up to the highest spire, he was filled with respect for those daring builders and their noble creation. He did not yet know that it is often better to let beautiful conceptions rest, for the reason that, upon earth, consummated works are sometimes really less fine and striking than incomplete projects.

And when at last, on the third evening, he found himself among the mountains, he was in raptures. It was a jovial world. Moving over the Rhine in every direction were brightly lighted steamboats laden with happy people, feasting and singing. Between the dark, vine-covered mountains the river reflected the rosy, evening light. Music rang on the water; music came from both banks. People were sitting on terraces, under leafy bowers, around pretty, shining lamps — drinking gold-colored wine out of green goblets; and the clinking of glasses and sound of loud laughter came from the banks. And, singing as they stepped, down the mountains came others, in their shirt sleeves, carrying their jackets on alpenstocks over their shoulders. The evening sky was aflame in the west, and the vineyard foliage and the porphyry rocks reflected the glowing red. Hurrah! One ought to be happy here. Truly, it seemed a jolly way of living.

Johannes and Marjon bade their long ark farewell, and went ashore. It saddened Johannes to leave the dear boat, for he was still a sentimental little fellow, who promptly attached himself by delicate tendrils to that which gave him happiness. And so the parting was painful.

They now began the work of earning their livelihood. And

Keesje's idle days were over, as well. They put his little red jacket upon him, and he had to climb trees, and pull up pennies in a basin.

And the children had to sing their songs until they lost their charm, and Johannes grew weary enough with them.

But they earned more — much more than Markus with his scissors-grinding. The big, heavily moustached, and whiskered gentlemen, the prettily dressed and perfumed ladies, sitting on the hotel terraces, looked at them with intolerable arrogance, saying all kinds of jesting things — things which Johannes only half understood, but at which they themselves laughed loudly. But in the end they almost all gave — some copper, some silver — until the *friséd* waiters, in their black coats and white shirt-fronts, crossly drove them away, fearing that their own fees might be diminished.

Marjon it was who dictated the next move, who was never at a loss, who dared the waiters with witty speeches, and always furnished advice. And when they had been singing rather too much, she began twirling and balancing plates. She spoke the strange tongue with perfect fluency, and she also looked for their night's resting-place.

The public — the stupid, proud, self-satisfied people who seemed to think only of their pleasure — did not wound Marjon so much as they did Johannes.

When their snobbishness and rudeness brought tears to his eyes, or when he was hurt on account of their silly jests, Marjon only laughed.

"But do not you care, Marjon?" asked Johannes, indignantly. "Does it not annoy you that they, every one of them, seem to think themselves so much finer, more important, and fortunate beings than you and I, when, instead, they are so stupid and ugly?"

And he thought of the people Wistik had shown him.

"Well, but what of it?" said Marjon, merrily. "We get our living out of them. If they only give, I don't care a rap.

Kees is much uglier, and you laugh about it as much as I do. Then why don't you laugh at the snobs?"

Johannes meditated a long time, and then replied:

"Keesje never makes me angry; but sometimes, when he looks awfully like a man, then I have to cry over him, because he is such a poor, dirty little fellow. But those people make me angry because they fancy themselves to be so much."

Marjon looked at him very earnestly, and said:

"What a good boy you are! As to the people — the public — why, I've always been taught to get as much out of 'em as I could. I don't care for them so much as I care for their money. I make fun of them. But you do not, and that's why you're better. That's why I like you."

And she pressed her fair head, with its glossy, short-cut hair, closer against his shoulder, thinking a little seriously about those hard words, "no foolishness."

They were happy days — that free life, the fun of earning the pennies, and the beautiful, late-summer weather amid the mountains. But the nights were less happy. Oh! what damp, dirty rooms and beds they had to use, because Fair-people could not, for even once, afford to have anything better. They were so rank with onions, and frying fat, and things even worse! On the walls, near the pillows, were suspicious stains; and the thick bed-covers were so damp, and warm, and much used! Also, without actual reason for it, but merely from imagination, Johannes felt creepy all over when their resting-place was recommended to them, with exaggerated praise, as a "very tidy room."

Marjon took all this much more calmly, and always fell asleep in no time, while Johannes sometimes lay awake for hours, restless and shrinking because of the uncleanness.

"It's nothing, if only you don't think about it," said Marjon, "and these people always live in this way."

And what astonished Johannes still more in Marjon was that she dared to step up so pluckily to the German functionaries, constables, officers, and self-conceited citizens.

It is fair to say that Johannes was afraid of such people. A railway official with a gruff, surly voice; a policeman with his absolutely inexorable manner; a puffed-out, strutting peacock of an officer, looking down upon the world about him, right and left; a red-faced, self-asserting man, with his moustache trained up high, and with ring-covered fingers, calling vociferously for champagne, and appearing very much satisfied with himself, — all these Marjon delighted to ridicule, but Johannes felt a secret dread of them. He was as much afraid of all these beings as of strange, wild animals; and he could not understand Marjon's calm impudence toward them.

Once, when a policeman asked about their passport, Johannes felt as if all were lost. Face to face with the harsh voice, the broad, brass-buttoned breast, and the positive demand for the immediate showing of the paper, Johannes felt as if he had in front of him the embodied might of the great German Empire, and as if, in default of the thing demanded, there remained for him no mercy.

But, in astonishment, he heard Marjon whisper in Dutch: "Hey, boy! Don't be upset by that dunce!"

To dare to say "that dunce," and of such an awe-inspiring personage, was, in his view, an heroic deed; and he was greatly ashamed of his own cowardice.

And Marjon actually knew how, with her glib tongue and the exhibition of some gold-pieces, to win this representative of Germany's might to assume a softer tone, and to permit them to escape without an inspection.

But it was another matter when Keesje, seated upon the arm of a chair, behind an unsuspecting lieutenant, took it into his little monkey-head to reach over the shining epaulet, and grasp the big cigar — probably with the idea of discovering what mysterious enjoyment lay hidden in such an object. Keesje missed the cigar, but caught hold of the upturned moustache, and then, perceiving he had missed his mark, he kept on pulling, spasmodically, from nervous fright.

The lieutenant, frightened, tortured, and in the end roundly

ridiculed, naturally became enraged; and an enraged German lieutenant was quite the most awful creature in human guise that Johannes had ever beheld. He expected nothing less than a beginning of the Judgment Day—the end of all things.

The precise details of that scrimmage he was never able to recall with accuracy. There was a general fracas, a clatter of iron chairs and stands, and vehement screeching from Keesje, who behaved himself like murdered innocence. From the lieutenant's highly flushed face Johannes heard at first a word indicating that he was suspected of having vermin. That left him cold, for he had been so glad to know that up to this time he had escaped them. Then he saw that it was not the shrieking Keesje, but Marjon herself, who had been nabbed and was being severely pommeled. She had hurriedly caught up the monkey, and was trying to flee with him.

Then his feelings underwent a sudden change, as if, in the theatre of his soul, "The Captivity" scene were suddenly shoved right and left to make place for "A Mountain View in a Thunder-storm."

The next moment he found himself on the back of the tall lieutenant, pounding away with all his might; at first on something which offered rather too much resistance—a shining black helmet—afterward, on more tender things—ears and neck, presumably. At the same time he felt himself, for several seconds, uncommonly happy.

In a trice there was another change in the situation, and he discovered himself in a grip of steel, to be flung down upon the dusty road in front of the terrace. Then he suddenly heard Marjon's voice:

"Has he hurt you? Can you run? Quick, then; run like lightning!"

Without understanding why, Johannes did as she said. The children ran swiftly down the mountain-side, slipped through the shrubbery of a little park, climbed over a couple of low, stone walls, and fled into a small house on the bank

of the river, where an old woman in a black kerchief sat peacefully plucking chickens.

Johannes and Marjon had continually met with helpfulness and friendliness among poor and lowly people, and now they were not sent off, although they were obliged to admit that the police might be coming after them.

"Well, you young scamps," said the old woman, with a playful chuckle, "then you must stay till night in the pigsty. They'll not look for you there; it smells too bad. But take care, if you wake Rike up, or if that gorilla of yours gets to fighting with him!"

So there they sat in the pigsty with Rike the fat pig, who made no movement except with his ears, and welcomed his visitors with short little grunts. It began to rain, and they sat as still as mice — Keesje, also, who had a vague impression that he was to blame for this sad state of things. Marjon whispered:

"Who would have thought, Jo, that you cared so much for me? I was afraid this time, and you punched his head. It was splendid! Mayn't I give you a kiss, now?"

In silence, Johannes accepted her offer. Then Marjon went on:

"But we were both of us stupid; I, because I forgot all about Kees, in the music; and you, because you let out about me."

"Let out about you!" exclaimed Johannes, in amazement.

"Certainly," said Marjon, "by shouting out that I was a girl!"

"Did I do that?" asked Johannes. It had quite slipped out of his mind.

"Yes," said Marjon, "and now we're in a pickle again! Other togs! You can't do that in these parts. That's worse than hitting a lieutenant over the head, and we mustn't do any more of that."

"Did he hit you hard?" asked Johannes. "Does it hurt still?"

"Oh," said Marjon, lightly, "I've had worse lickings than that."

That night, after dark, the old woman's son — the vine-dresser — released them from Rike's hospitable dwelling, and took them, in a rowboat, across the Rhine.

XV

BRIGHT and early one still, sunny morning they came to a small watering-place nestled in the mountains. It was not yet seven o'clock. A light mist clung around the dark-green summits, and the dew was sparkling on the velvety green grass, and over the flaming red geraniums, the white, purple-hearted carnations, and the fragrant, brown-green mignonette of the park. Fashionably dressed ladies and gentlemen were drinking, according to advice, the hot, saline waters of the springs; and later, while the cheerful music played, they promenaded up and down the marble-paved esplanade.

Marjon sought such places; for in them more was to be earned. Already a couple of competitors were there before them — a robust man and his little daughter. Both of them were dressed in flesh-colored tights, and in spangled, black velvet knickerbockers; but oh, how dusty and worn and patched they were! The little girl was much younger than Marjon, and had a vacant, impudent little face. She walked on her hands in such a way that her feet dangled down over her black, curly pate.

Johannes did not enjoy this encounter. Marjon and he belonged to the better class of Fair-people. Their caps and jackets just now were not, it is true, quite so fresh and well brushed as formerly, but all that they had on was whole — even their shoes. Johannes still wore his suit, which was that of a young gentleman, and Marjon was wearing the velvet stable-jacket of a circus-boy. They paid no attention to the shabby Hercules and his little daughter.

In Marjon's case this was only from vexation because of the competition; in Johannes', he well knew, it was pride. He pitied that rough man with the barbarous face, and that poor, dull child-acrobat; but it was not to his taste that he

should be thought their colleague and equal, by all these respectable watering-place guests.

He was so vexed he would not sing; and he walked dreamily on amid the flowers, with vague fancies, and a deep melancholy, in his soul. He thought of his childhood home, and the kitchen-garden; of the dunes, and of the autumn day when he went to the gardener's, at Robinetta's country home; of Windekind, of Markus, and of Aunt Seréna's flower-garden.

The flowers looked at him with their wide-open, serious eyes — the pinks, the stiff, striped zinnias, and the flaming yellow sunflowers. Apparently, they all pitied him, as if whispering to one another: "Look! Poor Little Johannes! Do you remember when he used to visit us in the land of elves and flowers? He was so young and happy then! Now he is sad and forsaken — a shabby circus-boy who must sing for his living. Is it not too bad?"

And the white, purple-hearted carnations rocked to and fro with compassion, and the great sunflowers hung their heads and looked straight down, with dismay in their eyes.

The sunshine was so calm and splendid, and the pointed heads of the mignonette smelled so sweet! And when Johannes came to a bed of drooping blue lobelias that seemed always to have shining drops of dewy tears in their eyes purely from sympathy, then he felt so sorry himself for poor Little Johannes that he had to go and sit down on a bench to cry. And there, just as if they understood the situation — in the music tent, concealed by the shrubbery — the portly band-master and his musicians, in their flat, gold-embroidered caps, were playing, very feelingly, a melancholy folksong. Marjon, however, who persistently kept business in mind, was on the marble esplanade, deep in jugglery with plates and eggs and apples. Johannes saw it, and was a little ashamed of himself. He began trying to make verses:

"Ah, scarlet geranium, blossom true!
Ah, lovely lobelia blue!
Why look those eyes so mournfully?
For whom do you wear,
In the morning bright,
Those glistening tears of dew?"

"Ah! do you still know me? . . ."

But he got no further, because he found it too hard, and also because he had no paper with him.

Just then Marjon came up:

"Why do you sit there bungling, Jo, and let me do all the work? As soon as the bread and butter comes you'll be sure to be on hand."

She spoke rather tartly, and it was not surprising that Johannes retorted curtly:

"I am not always thinking of money, and something to eat, like you."

That hit harder than he thought; and now the sun was sparkling not only upon the dew-drops in the lobelia's eyes, but upon those in the two clear eyes of a little girl. However, Marjon was not angry, but said gently:

"Were you making verses?"

Johannes nodded, without speaking.

"Excuse me, Jo. May I hear them?"

And Johannes began:

"Ah, scarlet geranium, blossom true!
Ah, lovely lobelia blue!
Why look those eyes so earnestly?
Why thus bedight,
This morning bright
With glistening tears of dew?"

"Oh, do you still think of the olden days . . ."

Again he broke down, and gazed silently out before him, with sorrowful eyes.

"Are you going to finish it, Jo?" asked Marjon with quiet deference. "You just stay here, I shall get on very well alone. See if I don't!"

And she returned to the fashionable, general promenade, with Keesje, her plates, her eggs, and her apples.

Then Johannes looked up, and suddenly saw before him something so charming and captivating that he became conscious of an entirely new sensation. It was as if until now he had been living in a room whose walls were pictured with flowers and mountains and waterfalls and blue sky, and as if those walls had suddenly vanished, and he could see all about him the real blue heavens, and the real woods and rivers.

The sunny, flower-filled little park of the watering-place was bounded by steep rocks of porphyry. At the foot of them, by the side of a small stream of clear, dark water, was a rich growth of shadowy underwood. A small path led from the mountain, and two children were descending it, hand in hand, talking fast in their light, clear voices.

They were two little girls, about nine and ten years of age. They wore black velvet frocks confined at the waist by colored ribbons — one red, the other ivory-white. Each one had trim, smoothly drawn stockings of the same color as her sash, and fine, low shoes. They were bare-headed, and both had thick golden hair that fell down over the black velvet in heavy, glossy curls.

The musicians, as if aware of their presence, now played a charming dance-tune, and the two little girls, with both hands clasped together, began playfully keeping time with their slender limbs — *One*, two, three — *one*, two, three — or the "three-step," as children say. And what Johannes experienced when he saw and heard that, I am not going even to try to describe to you, for the reason that he has never been able himself to do it.

Only know that it was something very delightful and very

mysterious, for it made him think of Windekind's fairyland. Why, was more than he could understand.

At first, it seemed as if something out of the glorious land of Windekind and Father Pan had been brought to him, and that it was those two little girls upon the mountain-path, keeping time to the music with their slim little feet.

Then, hand in hand, the two children went through the park, chatting as they went — now and then running, and sometimes laughing merrily as they stopped beside a flower or a butterfly, until, through the maze of promenaders, they disappeared in the halls of a large hotel.

Johannes followed after them, wondering what they were so much interested in, observing the while all their pretty little ways, their intonations and winsome gestures, their dainty dress, their beautiful hair and slender forms.

When he was again with Marjon, he could not help remarking how much less pretty she was — with her meagre form and pale face — her larger hands and feet, and short, ash-colored hair. Johannes said nothing about this little adventure, but was very quiet and introspective. Because of this, Marjon also was for a long time less merry than usual.

That afternoon, when they went the round of the place again, trying to collect money from the families who, according to the German custom, were taking cake and coffee in front of the hotels and the pavilions, Johannes felt himself getting very nervous in the neighborhood of the big hotel into which the two little girls had gone. His heart beat so fast he could not sing any more.

And sure enough, as they came nearer, he heard the very same two bird-like little voices which had been ringing in his ears the whole day long, shouting for joy. That was not on account of Little Johannes, but of Keesje. For the first time Johannes was fiercely jealous of him.

In a gentle, quieting way, a musical voice called out two names: "Olga! — Frieda!"

But Johannes was too much confused and undone to note

clearly what he saw. It was they — the two lovely children whom he had first seen in the morning — and they came close up, and spoke to Keesje. Their mother called them again, and then the children coaxed and pleaded, in most supplicating tones, that the delightful monkey might be allowed to come a little nearer — that they might give him some cake, and that he might perform his tricks.

It seemed to Johannes as if he were in a dream — as if everything around him were hazy and indistinct. He had felt that way when he stood in Robinetta's house, confronted by those hostile men. But then everything was dismal and frightful, while now it was glad and glorious. He heard, vaguely, the confusing sounds of voices, and the clatter of cups and saucers, and silver utensils. He felt the touch of the children's gentle little hands, and was led to a small table whence the reproving voice had sounded. A lady and a gentleman were sitting there. Some dainties were given to Keesje.

"Can you sing?" asked a voice in German.

Then Johannes bethought him for the first time that the two little girls had been speaking in English. Marjon tuned her guitar and gave him a hard poke in the side with the neck of it, because she found him getting so flustered again. Then they sang the song that Johannes had completed that morning, and which Marjon had since put to music.

"Ah, scarlet geranium, blossom true!

Ah, lovely lobelia blue!

Why gaze at me so mournfully?

Why thus bedight,

This morning bright

With glistening tears of dew?

"Ah! is't remembrance of olden days,

When the exquisite nightingale sung?

When the fairies danced, over mossy ways,

In the still moonlight,

'Neath the stars so bright,
When yet the world was young?

"Ah, scarlet geranium, blossom true!
Ah, lovely lobelia blue!
The sun is grown dim, and the sky o'ercast,
The winds grow cold,
The world is old,
And the Autumn comes fast — so fast!"

Johannes was singing clearly again. The lump in his throat had gone away as suddenly as it had come.

Then he heard the gentleman say in great astonishment: "They are singing in Dutch!" And then they had to repeat their song.

Johannes sang as he never yet had sung — with full fervor. All his sadness, all his indefinite longings, found voice in his song. Marjon accompanied him with soft, subdued guitar-strokes, and with her alto voice. Yet the music was entirely hers.

The effect upon the family at the table, moreover, was quite different from that which up to this time they had produced. The stylish lady uttered a prolonged "Ah!" in a soft, high voice, and closely scanned the pair through a long-handled, tortoise-shell lorgnette. The gentleman said in Dutch: "Fine! First rate! Really, that is unusually good!" The little girls clapped their hand, and shouted "Bravo! Bravo!"

Johannes felt his face glowing with pleasure and satisfaction. Then the stylish lady, placing her lorgnette in her lap, said:

"Come up nearer, boys." She, too, now spoke in Dutch, but with a foreign accent, that sounded very charming to Johannes.

"Tell me," she said kindly, "where did you come from, and where did you find that beautiful little song?"

"We came from Holland, Mevrouw," replied Johannes, still a trifle confused, "and we made the song ourselves."

"Made it yourselves!" exclaimed the lady, with affable astonishment, while she exchanged a glance with the gentleman beside her. "The words, or the music?"

"Both," said Johannes. "I made the words, and my friend the music."

"Well, well, well!" said the lady, smiling at his pretty air of self-satisfaction.

And then they both had to sit at the table and have some cake and coffee. Johannes was gloriously happy, but the two dear little girls had eyes only for Keesje, whom they tried cautiously to caress. When Keesje turned his head round rather too suddenly, and looked at them too sharply out of his piercing little brown eyes, they quickly withdrew their small white hands, making merry little shrieks of fright. How jealous Johannes was of Keesje! Marjon wore the serious, indifferent expression of face that was native to her.

"Now tell us a little more," said the charming lady. "Surely you are not common tramps, are you?"

Johannes looked into the refined face, and the eyes that were slightly contracted from near-sightedness. It seemed to him as if he never before had seen such a noble and beautiful lady. She was far from old yet — perhaps thirty years of age — and was very exquisitely dressed, with a cloud of lace about her shoulders and wrists, pearls around her neck, and wearing a profusion of sparkling rings and bracelets. An exquisite perfume surrounded her, and as she looked at Johannes, and addressed him so kindly, he was completely enchanted and bewildered. Acceding to her request he began, with joyful alacrity, to tell of himself and his life, of the death of his father, of his Aunt Seréna, and of his meeting with Marjon, and their flight together. But still he was discreet enough not to begin about Windekind and Pluizer, and his first meeting with Markus.

The circle gave close attention, while Marjon looked as dull and dejected as ever, and busied herself with Keesje.

"How extremely interesting!" said the children's mother,

addressing the gentleman who sat next her. "Do you not think so, Mijnheer van Lieverlee? — Very, very interesting?"

"Yes, Mevrouw, I do, indeed — very peculiar! It is a find. What is your name, my boy?"

"Johannes, Mijnheer."

"Is that so? — But you are not Johannes, the friend of Windekind!"

Johannes blushed, and stammered in great confusion: "Yes, — I am he, Mijnheer!"

Suddenly Keesje gave an ugly screech, causing the lady and gentleman to start nervously. Evidently, Marjon had pinched his tail — a thing she rarely did.

XVI

SEE, now, what comes of not doing what I expressly desired! Mijnheer van Lieverlee knew very well that I did not wish Little Johannes to be taken in hand; and yet now it happened, and, as you are to hear, with disastrous consequences.

Mijnheer van Lieverlee was not more than six years the senior of Johannes. He had large blue eyes, a waxy white face with two spots of soft color, a scanty, flax-like, double-pointed beard, and a thick tuft of sandy hair artfully arranged above his forehead. A scarf-pin of blue sapphires was sparkling in his broad, dark-violet scarf, a high, snow-white collar reached from his modish coat-collar up to the hair in his neck, and his hands — covered with rings — were resting on the exquisitely carved, ivory head of an ebony walking-stick. On the table, in front of him, lay a fine, light-grey felt hat, and his pantaloons were of the same color.

All were silent for a moment after Johannes' acknowledgment. Then Mijnheer van Lieverlee pulled out a handsome pocket-book, bearing an ornamental monogram in small diamonds, made in it several entries, and said to the lady:

"We can say to a certainty that this is not an accident. Evidently, his 'karma' is favorable. That he should have come directly here to us who know his history, and comprehend his soul, is the work of the highest order of intelligences — those who are attending him. We must heed the suggestion."

"It surely is an important circumstance, and one to be considered," said the lady, irresolutely. "Where do you live?"

"Over there by the railway — in the lodging-house," replied Marjon.

Mevrouw looked rather coldly, and said: "Well, boys, you may go home now. Here are three marks for each of you."

And, Johannes, will you not write out that little song for me? There really was a charming melancholy in it. 'Twas sympathetic."

"Yes, Mevrouw, I will do so. And then may I come and bring it to you myself?"

"Certainly, certainly!" said the lady; but, at the same time, she closely scrutinized his clothing, through her lorgnette.

When they had turned away, and were out of sight, Marjon ran straight back again to the rear of the hotel, and began making personal inquiries, and kept busy as long as she could find any one who knew anything about the household of the stately lady, and the two lovely little girls.

"Do you mean the Countess?" asked a conceited head-waiter, with scornful emphasis. "Do you perchance belong to the family?"

"Well, why not?" retorted Marjon, with great self-assurance. "All the same, there have been countesses who eloped with head-waiters."

The cook and the chambermaids laughed.

"Clear out, you rascal!" said the waiter.

"What country is she from?" asked Marjon, undeterred.

"She? She has no native country. The Count was a Pole, and the Countess came from America. At present she is living in Holland."

"Widow — or divorced?" asked one of the chambermaids.

"Divorced, of course! That's much more interesting."

"And that young Hollander? Is he related to her?"

"What! He's a fellow-traveler. They met there."

"Shall we not start out again, Jo?" asked Marjon, as they sat together eating their supper of brown bread and cheese, in the same cramped, smoky room where the humble Hercules and his little daughter were also sitting — dressed, at present, in shabby civilian clothes, and each provided with a glass of beer.

"I am going to take my song," said Johannes.



"Manage it some way, Jo; I'll have nothing to do with those people."

Johannes ate his supper in silence. But, secretly, his feeling toward Marjon grew cooler, and she dropped in his estimation. She was jealous, or insensitive to what was beautiful or noble in people. She had also lived so long among dirty and rude folk! Oh, those two dear little girls! They were nobler and more refined beings. Softly — fervently — Johannes repeated their names: "Olga! Frieda!"

Then, as true as you live, there came a gold-bebraided small boy from the big hotel, bearing a note so perfumed that the close little room was filled with its sweetness; and the beer drinkers sniffed it with astonishment.

It was from Mijnheer, requesting Johannes to come to him, but without the monkey.

"Go by yourself," said Marjon. "Kees mustn't go along because he has an odor of another sort. You may say that I prefer that of Kees."

Mijnheer van Lieverlee was drinking strong black coffee from small metal cups, and smoking a Turkish pipe with an amber mouthpiece. At each pull of the pipe the water gurgled. He wore black silk hose and polished shoes, and he invited Johannes to a seat beside him on the broad divan.

After a pause he addressed Johannes as follows: "There — that's it, Johannes! Sit quite still, and while we talk try to maintain yourself in the uppermost soul-sphere." Then, after a period of pipe-gurgling, Mijnheer van Lieverlee asked: "Are you there?"

Johannes was not quite sure about it, but he nodded assent, being very curious concerning what was to follow.

"I can ask you that, Johannes, because we understand each other instantly. You and I, you know — you and I! We knew each other before we were in the body. It is not necessary for us to make each other's acquaintance after the manner of ordinary, commonplace people. We can instantly

do as you and Windekind did. We are not learning to know, but we recognize each other."

Johannes listened attentively to this interesting and extraordinary statement. He looked at the speaker respectfully, and tried indeed to recall him, but without success.

"You will already have wondered that I should know about your adventures. But that is not so very marvelous, for there is some one else to whom you appear to have told them. Do you know whom I mean?"

Johannes knew well whom he meant.

"Really, you ought not to have done it, Johannes. When I heard of it I said at once that it was a great pity. The world is too coarse and superficial in such matters. People do not comprehend them. You must not permit that which is rare and delicate to be desecrated and contaminated by the foul touch of the indifferent public — the stupid multitude. Do you understand?"

Johannes nodded, the pipe gurgled, and Mijnheer van Lieverlee took a sip of coffee. Then, in a lighter tone, and gesticulating airily with his slender, white hands, he resumed:

"The veil of Maja, Johannes, obscures the vision of all who are created — of all who breathe and have aspirations — of all who enjoy and suffer. We must extricate ourselves from it. Will you have some coffee, too?"

"If you please, Mijnheer," said Johannes.

"A cigarette? Or do you not smoke yet?"

"No, Mijnheer."

"It is true, Windekind did not like tobacco smoke. But I do not smoke as common people do, for the fun of it or because it is pleasant. No! I permit myself to do so through my lowest qualities — the eighth and ninth articulations of Karma-Rupa. My higher attributes — the fourth and fifth — remain apart; just as a gentleman from the balcony of his country-seat views his cattle grazing. The cows do nothing but eat ravenously, digest, and eliminate. The gentleman makes of them a poem or a picture."

A pause, accompanied by the gurgling of the pipe.

"Well, as I have said, we should not cast before swine the pearls of our higher sensations and states of mind. We, Johannes — you and I, who have already passed through many incarnations — we are aged souls — we have already worn the veil so long that it is beginning to wear out. We can see through it. Now, we must not have too much to do with those young novices who are just setting out. We should decline, retrograde, and lose the benefit of our costly conquests."

That all seemed quite just to Johannes, and very flattering moreover. And it was also now made clear to him why he got on so poorly with people. He was of age, among minors.

"We, Johannes," resumed Van Lieverlee, "belong, so to speak, to the veterans of life. We bear the scars of countless incarnations, the stripes of many years — or, rather, let me say ages — of service. We must maintain our rank, and not throw to the dogs our dignity and prestige. This you will do if you continue to noise abroad all your intimate experiences; and I believe you still have a childish and quite perilous tendency that way.

Johannes thought of his many faults and blunders — of his stupidity in asserting his wisdom at school, and in blurting out Windekind's name before the men. Ashamed, he sat staring into his empty coffee cup.

"In short, it evidently was intended that you should find me, this time — me and Countess Dolores. For you must know that you have found two souls of the supremest refinement. Exactly what you need."

"Yes, how charming she is, and how lovely the children are!" chimed in Johannes, enthusiastically.

"Not on account of her being a countess," said Van Lieverlee, with a gesture of disdain. "Titles signify nothing with us. My family is perhaps more distinguished than hers. But she is the sister of our souls — a blending of glowing passion and lily-white purity."

At these fine words of Van Lieverlee, uttered with great care

and emphasis, Johannes felt himself coloring with embarrassment. How did any one dare to say such words as if it were nothing?

"Are you a poet?" he asked bashfully.

"Certainly, I am. But you are one also, my boy. Did you not know it? Well, then, let me tell you, you are a poet. You see, at present you are the ugly duckling that for the first time meets a swan. Do you understand? Do not be afraid, Johannes. Do not be afraid, brother swan! Lift up your yellow beak — I shall not oppress you, but embrace you."

Johannes did lift up his yellow beak, but, instead of embracing him, Van Lieverlee took out the diamond-bedecked pocket-book, and began writing in it, hurriedly. Then, as he put away book and pencil, he smilingly said: "One must hold fast to good ideas. They are precious."

"Well, then," he resumed, drawing at his pipe again, while again it gurgled loudly, "you really could not have managed better, in the pursuit of your great aim, than to have come to us. We know the explanation of all those singular adventures with Pluizer and Windekind, and we can show you the infallible way to what you are seeking. That is, we go together."

Now was not that good news for Johannes? How stupid of Marjon not to be willing to go too! He listened thoughtfully to what followed.

"Give me your attention, Johannes, and I will tell you who all those beings are that you have encountered. I will also solve the riddle of their power, and tell you what there remains for us to do."

At that moment the door opened, and Countess Dolores came in with the children. She was dazzling, with magnificent jewels sparkling on her bare neck and arms. The children were in white. The grand table-d'hôte was over, and the countess had now come to drink her Arabic coffee with Van Lieverlee.

"Ah!" said she, looking at him through her lorgnette, "Have you a visitor? Shall we disturb you? But, really

you can make such delicious coffee, and I cannot endure the hotel coffee!"

"Where is the monkey? Where is the monkey?" cried the two children, running up to Johannes.

Johannes stood up, in confusion. The two winsome children encircled him. He scented the exquisite perfume of their luxuriant hair and their rich dress. He felt their warm breath, their soft hands. He was charmed, through and through — possessed by delightful emotions. The little girls caressed him while they asked after the monkey, until the gently reproachful "Olga! — Frieda!" sounded again.

Then they went and sat with Johannes on the sofa, one each side of him. The mother lighted a cigarette.

"Now proceed with your talking," said she, "so that I can be learning a little." Then in English: "If you listen quietly, girls, and are not troublesome, you may stay here."

Van Lieverlee had risen, put aside his Turkish pipe, grasped the lapel of his skirtless dinner coat with his left hand, and was gesticulating with the right, in front of Johannes and the countess.

"I ought to explain to him who Windekind, Wisterik, or — What is his name? Wistarik? . . . and Pluizer, are, Mevrouw. You know, do you not, those characters in Johannes' life?"

"I — I — do not recall them," said the lady, "but that is nothing — speak out. Do not mind me. I do not count. I am only a silly creature."

"Ah! If people in general were similarly silly! Windekind, Wisterik, and Pluizer, then Johannes, are nothing other than "dewas," or elementals, materialized by a supreme effort of the will. They are personified, or rather impersonated, natural power — plasmatic appearances from the crystal-clear, elementary oneness. Windekind is harmonic poetry, or, rather, poetic harmony — the original dawning, or, rather, the dawning originality, of our planetary aboriginal consciousness. Wistarik, on the contrary, or Pluizer, is demoniacal antithesis — the eternally skeptical negation, or

negative skepticism. They are like all ebb and flow, like the swinging pendulum, like winter and summer, eternally struggling with each other — continually destroying and forever reviving, the indispensable, mutually excluding, and yet again mutually complementing, first principles of dualistic monism, or of monistic dualism."

"How interesting!" murmured the countess; and turning to Johannes, she asked very seriously: "And have you really met with these elementals?"

"I — I believe I have," stammered Johannes.

"But, Van Lieverlee, then he truly is a medium! Do you not think so?"

"Of the second grade, Mevrouw, undoubtedly. Perhaps, with study and proper culture, he will attain the first rank."

"But would it not be well for us to introduce him to the Pleiades?"

And turning toward Johannes, she said affably: "We have a circle, you know, for the study of the higher sciences, and for the general improvement of our 'Karma.'"

"An ideal society, with a social ideal," supplemented Van Lieverlee.

That sounded very alluring to Johannes. Would Frieda and Olga belong to it also? he wondered.

He said, however, as politely and modestly as possible: "But, Mevrouw, would I really be in place there?"

His manner pleased the countess. Smiling most sweetly she said: "Surely, my boy! Rank has nothing to do with the higher knowledge."

Then to Van Lieverlee, in English, with that characteristic, cool loftiness of the English, who suppose the hearer does not understand their language: "Really, he is not so bad — not so very common!"

But Johannes had learned English at school; yet, because he was still such a mere boy, with so little self-consciousness, he felt flattered rather than offended. He said — using

English now, himself: "I am not good yet, but I will try my best to become so."

This word fell again upon good ground, with mother and daughters. There came to Johannes that exhilarating sensation of making conquests; he, Little Johannes — a brief while ago the scissors-grinder boy — at present a singer of street songs — *he*, in a world of supremely refined spirits, with a beautiful countess, all decked with glittering jewels, and her two enchanting little daughters! And that, not on account of birth or patronage, but through his own personal powers. If he could only see Wistik again, now — how he would boast of it!

But, suddenly, to his honor be it said, something else occurred to him:

"My comrade, Mevrouw! May we both go?"

"Who is your comrade? How did you meet him?"

Whoever had heard Johannes then would not have said that, only so short a time ago, he had thought slightly of his little friend. He stood up for her warmly, described her natural goodness and her unusual talents, — yes even drew on his imagination for her probable noble origin, until it ended in his having touched the heart of Countess Dolores. But, in his enthusiasm, he said, by turns, "he" and "she," so that one of the little girls, being observing, as children usually are, abruptly asked: "Why do you say 'she'? Is it a girl?"

Then Johannes confessed. It could do no harm here, he thought — among such high-minded people. Blushing more deeply than ever, he said: "Yes, it is really a girl. She is disguised, so as not to fall into anybody's hands."

Van Lieverlee looked at Johannes very sternly and critically, without making any comment. The little girls, with a serious air, said: "How lovely!" Mevrouw laughed, rather nervously:

"Oh, oh! That is romantic. Almost piquant. Then let her come, but in the clothing that belongs to her, if you please."

"And the monkey, Mama? Will the monkey come, too?" asked Olga, the elder.

"Oh, lovely, lovely!" cried Frieda, clapping her hands.

"No, children; it is not to be thought of. Of course, you understand, Johannes, that the monkey cannot come with you. He would have a very bad influence. Would he not, Van Lieverlee?"

Van Lieverlee nodded his head emphatically, and, with an expressive gesture of refusal, said: "It would simply nullify all the higher influences. We must exclude carefully all low and impure fluids. The monkey, Johannes, has in general a very low and unfavorable aura, or inimical sphere, as you may always perceive from his fatal odor."

"It would make me ill," said the countess, putting her handkerchief to her face at the very thought of it.

So Johannes walked home that evening, proud and happy, with his head full of brilliant fancies; but at the same time burdened with a charge — a message to Marjon — which grew more and more heavy as the distance between him and the grand hotel increased, and the distance between him and the small lodging-house lessened.

XVII

You will be sure to think matters went hard that night, in the rank little room, and that there was a scene between Marjon and Johannes, involving many tears. If so, this time you have made a mistake.

Even before he reached the house, the task had become too difficult for him. When he saw Marjon, with her stolid face, sitting as she probably had been sitting the entire evening — listless and lonely, his own joyful excitement vanished, and with it went the inclination to be outspoken and communicative. He well knew in advance that he should meet with no response nor interest. And what chance would there be of inducing Marjon to give up Keesje for the Pleiades, so long as he could not convey to her even the slightest spark of that ardent admiration for the beautiful and worthy of which he himself had become conscious.

Therefore, he said nothing, and, as Marjon asked no questions, they went calmly and peacefully to sleep. Johannes, however, first lay awake a long time, musing over the splendid worldly conquest he had made, and the distressing difficulties into which it had led him. Marjon would not go with him, that was certain; and ought he to desert her again? Or must he renounce all that beauty — the most beautiful of all things he had found in the world?

You must not suppose, however, that he had such great expectations from what Van Lieverlee had pictured to him. Although looking up with intelligent respect to one so much older than himself, so elegant and superior in appearance, and who professed to be so traveled, well read, and eloquent, Johannes in this instance was clever enough to see that not all was gold that glittered.

But the two dear little girls and their beautiful mother drew him with an irresistible force. If there was anything

good and fine in this world, it was here. Should he turn away so long as he could cling to it? Had the supremely good Father ever permitted him to see more beautiful creatures? and should he esteem any faith more holy than faith in the Father of whom Markus had taught him, and who only made himself known through the beauty of his creation?

The following day he found himself no nearer a solution of his difficulties. Marjon still asked no questions, and gave him no opportunity to tell anything.

Keesje sipped his sweetened coffee out of Marjon's saucer with much noisy enjoyment, carefully wiping out what remained with his flat hand, and licking it off, while he kept sending swift glances after more, as calmly and peacefully as if the Pleiades and the higher knowledge had no existence.

How, then, could Johannes now accompany her to their daily work? He did not feel himself in a condition to do so; and, since they had received six marks extra, the day before, he said he was going out to take a walk, alone, in order to think. "Perhaps I may come home with a new poem," said he. But he had slight hope of doing so. He would be so glad if he could find a way out of his difficulties. He went to seek help in the mountains. Was there not there an unde-filed bit of nature, the same as on the dunes of his native land — beside the sea?

Marjon's pale face wore a really sorrowful look, because he wanted to go without her. Her obstinacy gave way, and she would have liked to question him, but she held herself loftily and said: "Have your fling, but don't get lost."

Johannes went up the mountain path where he had first seen the two little girls. It was a still, beautiful September day — a little misty. Here and there, beneath the underwood, the ferns had become all brown; and the blackberries, wet with dew, were glistening along his way amid their red-bordered leaves. How many spider-webs there were amidst the

foliage! There was a solemn stillness over all; but, as Johannes climbed farther up the mountain dell, he heard the constant rushing of water, and in the small mountain meadows — the open places in the woods — he saw many little rivulets glistening in the grass, gurgling and murmuring as they flowed.

Still farther, where the woods were denser and the mountains more lonely, he heard now and then the sound of a fleeing deer; and he saw too a fine roe, with fear-filled eyes and large ears directed toward himself from the forest's edge.

At last he came to a narrow path bordering a small brook. To right and left were dark rocks glistening with moisture and beautifully overgrown with fantastic lichens; and there were little rosette-like clumps of ferns, and exquisite, graceful maiden-hair, gently quivering in the spray of the waterfall. Higher up began the overhanging underwood, and thorny bramble-bushes, while only now and then were there glimpses of the steep mountain sides, with the knotty roots of dense firs and beeches.

There seemed no end to that path. It wound all through the bottom of the ravine, following the brook — sometimes crossing it by a couple of stepping-stones, and thence again continuing to the other bank. And it grew stiller in the mountains. The blue sky above could seldom be seen, and the sunlight sifted only dimly through the leaves of the mountain ash and the hazel tree. Tall digitalis, with its rows of red and yellow bells, looked down upon Johannes out of the shadowy depths of the thicket with venomous regard, as if threatening him.

Where was he? An agitation, half anxious, half delightful, took possession of him. It was like Windekind's wonderland here!

He went on and on, wondering how much farther he could go without there being a change. He grew very tired, and then quite distressed.

Out of the general stillness a vague, indefinable sound now

proceeded. At first it seemed to be the throbbing and rushing of his blood, and the heart-beats in his ears; but it was stronger and more distinct — a roaring, with an undertone of melancholy moaning like continuous thunder or ocean surf, constant and regular, and, also, a higher note sounding by fits and starts, like the ringing of bells borne by a high wind.

And listen! A sound loud as the report of a cannon, making the ground tremble!

Johannes ran about in his agitation, looking on all sides. But there was no wind — every leaflet, every blade of grass, was still as death. The sound of water, alone — the rush of water — grew louder!

Then he saw, in front of him, the small cascade which caused the sound. The brook was flowing over the face of a rock, down amid the ferns. The path seemed to come to an end, and lose itself in the darkness.

Behind the waterfall, hidden by the foaming flow as by a veil, was a grotto, and the path entered it.

And now Johannes heard the sounds clearly — as if they were coming out of the earth: the deep resounding, the short intermittent thunderclaps, and the ringing of bells — incessant and regular.

He sat down beside the path much agitated, and panting from his rapid movement, and gazed through the veil of water into the cool, dark grotto. He sat there a long time, listening, hesitating, not knowing whether to venture farther or to turn back.

And slowly — slowly — a great mysterious sadness began to steal over him. He saw, too, that the mists were still rising from the valley, and that a mass of dark grey clouds was silently taking the place of the glad sunlight.

Then he heard near him a slight sound — a soft, sad sighing — a slight, gentle wailing — a helpless sobbing.

And, sitting on the rock next to him he saw his little friend Wistik. He was looking straight at Wistik's little bald head, with its thin grey hair. The poor fellow had taken off his little

red cap, and was holding it, with both hands, up to his face. He was sobbing and sniveling into it as if his heart would break, and the tears were trickling down his long, pointed beard to the ground.

"Wistik!" cried Johannes, filled with pity and distress. "What is it, little friend — my good mannikin? What is the matter?"

But Wistik shook his head. He was crying so hard he could not speak.

At last he controlled himself, took his cap wet with tears away from his face, and put it on his head. Then, sobbing and hiccoughing, he slid from his seat, and stepped upon the stone in the brook. With both hands he grasped the sparkling veil of falling water, tore a broad rent in it, turned round his whimpering little face, and silently beckoned Johannes to follow him.

The latter went through the dark fissure while Wistik held the water aside, and reached the interior quite dry. Not a drop fell upon his head. Then they went farther into the cavern, Wistik taking the lead, for he was used to the darkness and knew the way. Johannes followed, holding him by the coat.

It was totally dark, and continued so a long time while they walked on, perceptibly downward, over the smooth, hard way.

The sombre sounds grew louder and louder about them. The echoing, the peals of thunder, the ringing of bells — all these overwhelmed now the babbling of the water.

In the distance the light was shining — a grey twilight, pale as the misty morning. The day shone in, making the wet stones glimmer with a feeble sheen. A tumultuous noise now penetrated the rocky passage, and the screaming and bellowing of the wind-storm greeted the ear.

Soon they were standing outside, in sombre daylight. There was nothing to be seen save a desolate heap of mighty rocks, grizzly and water-stained. No plant — not a blade of grass — was growing in its midst.

Just before them an angry sea was roaring and raving, casting great breakers upon the strand. Once in a while Johannes saw the white foam tossing high. Great, quivering flakes were torn away by the storm, and driven from rock to rock.

Iron-grey clouds, in ragged patches, were chasing along the heavens, transforming themselves as they sped. They scudded close to the boiling sea, and the white foam torn from the mighty breakers seemed almost to touch them. The earth trembled as the waves broke on the rocks, and the wind howled and shrieked and whistled amid the uproar, like the baying of a dog at the moon, or the yell of a man in desperation.

Wherever the dark clouds were torn apart an alarmingly livid night sky was exposed.

Oppressed by the high wind, blinded by the spray, Johannes sought shelter with Wistik in the lee of a rock, and looked away, over the open country.

It appeared to be evening. Over the sea, but at the extreme left, where Johannes had never seen it, the sunlight was visible. For one instant the face of the sun itself could be seen — sad, and red as blood — not far from the horizon. Beneath it, like pillars of glowing brass, the rays of light streamed down to rest upon the sea.

And now and then, on the other side, high up in the ashen sky, appeared the pale face of the moon — deathly pale, hopelessly sad, motionless and resigned — in the midst of the furious troop of clouds.

Johannes looked at his friend in indescribable anguish.

"Wistik, what is this? Where are we? What is happening? — *Wistik!*"

But Wistik shook his head, lifted up his swollen eyes toward the sky, and, in mute anguish, clenched his fists.

Above the roar of wind and sea could still be heard the deep-toned sound, like the report of cannon or the booming of bells. Johannes looked around. Behind him rose the

mountains — black and menacing — their proud, heaven-high heads confronting the rushing swirl of clouds that were piled up, miles high, into a rounded black mass. At times it lightened vividly and then followed a frightful peal of thunder. And when one of the highest peaks was freed from its mantle of mists, Johannes saw that it was afire with a steady, orange-colored glow which grew ever fiercer and whiter.

The tolling of bells came from every direction, as if thousands on thousands of cathedral bells were ringing in unison.

Then Wistik and Johannes took their way inland, clambering over the jagged rocks, clinging to each other in the wild wind. The sea thundered still louder, and the wind whistled as if in utter frenzy — like an imprisoned maniac tugging at his bars.

"It is no use," wailed Wistik. "It is no use. He is dead, dead, dead!"

Then Johannes heard the winds speaking as he had formerly heard the flowers and animals talk.

"He shall live!" shrieked the Wind; "I will not let him die!"

And the Sea spoke: "Them that menace him shall I destroy — his enemies devour. The hills shall I grind to powder, and all animals o'erwhelm."

Then spoke the Mountain: "It is too late. The time is fulfilled. He is dead."

Now Johannes knew what it was the bells were sounding. They cried through all the earth, and the darkened heavens:

"Pan is dead! Pan is dead!"

And the pale Moon spoke softly and plaintively:

"Alas! poor earth! Where now is thy beauty? Now shall we weep — weep — weep!"

Finally, the Sun also spoke: "The Eternal changes not. A new day has come. Be resigned."

And all at once it grew still—perfectly still. The wind went suddenly down. The air was so motionless that the iridescent foam-bubbles floated hither and thither as if uncertain where to alight.

A silence, full of dread, oppressed the whole dreary land.

The waste of waters only, could not so suddenly subside, and still pounded in heavy rollers upon the shore.

But it also grew still and calm—so calm that the sun and the moon were reflected in it, as perfectly as in a mirror.

The thunder was silenced about the volcano, and everything was waiting. But the bells pealed on, loud and clear: "Pan is dead! Pan is dead!"

And now the clouds formed a dark, fleecy layer above the mountains—soft and black, like mourning crêpe. From it there fell perpendicularly a fine rain, as if the heavens were shedding silent tears.

The air was clearer above the sea, and moon and evening star stood bright against a pale, greenish sky. Glowing in a cloudless space, the red sun was nearing the horizon. When Johannes turned away and looked toward the mountains, now veiled in leaden mists, a marvelous double rainbow, with its brilliant colors, was spanning the ashen land.

Out of a deep valley that cleft the mountains like the gash of a sword, and upon whose sides Johannes thought to have seen dark forests, approached a long, slow-moving procession.

Strange, shadowy figures like large night-moths hovered and floated before it, and flew silently like phantoms beside it.

Then came gigantic animals with heavy, cautious tread—elephants with swaying trunks and shuffling hide, their bony heads rolling up and down; rhinoceri, with heads held low, and glittering, ill-natured eyes; snuffling, snorting hippopotami, with their watery, cruel glances; indolent, sullen monsters with flabby-fleshed bodies supported by slim little legs; serpents, large and small, gliding and zig-zagging over the ground like an oncoming flood; herds of deer and ante-



lopes and gazelles — all of them distressed and frightened, and jostling one another; troops of buffaloes and cattle, pushing and thrusting; lions and tigers, now creeping stealthily, then bounding lightly up over the turbulent throng, as fishes, chased from below, spring out of the undulating water; and round about the procession, thousands of birds — some of them with slow, heavy wing-strokes — alighting at times upon the rocks by the wayside; others, incessantly on the wing, circling and swaying, back and forth and up and down; finally, myriads of insects — bees and beetles, flies and moths — like great clouds, grey and white and varicolored, all in ceaseless motion.

And every creature in the throng which could make a sound made lamentation after its own fashion. The loudest was the worried, smothered lowing of the cattle, the howling and barking of the wolves and hyenas, and the shrill, quivering “oolooloo” of the owls.

The whole was one volume of voiced sorrow — an overwhelming cry of woe and lamentation, rising above a continual, sombre humming and buzzing.

“This is only the vanguard,” said Wistik, whose despair had calmed a little at the sight of this lively spectacle. “These are only the animals yet. Now the animal-spirits are coming.”

Then, in a great open space respectfully avoided by all the animals, came a group of wonderful figures. All had the shapes of animals, only they were larger and more perfectly formed. They seemed also to be much more proud and sagacious, and they moved not by means of feet and wings, but floated like shadows, while their eyes and heads seemed to emit rays of light, like the sea on a dark night.

“Come up nearer,” said Wistik. “They know us.”

And it really seemed to Johannes as if the ghosts of the animals greeted them, sadly and solemnly; but only those of the animals known to him in his native land. And what most impressed him was that the largest and most beautiful were not those esteemed most highly by human beings.

"Oh, look! Wistik, are those the butterfly-spirits? How big and handsome they are!"

They were splendid creatures — large as a house — with radiant eyes, and their bodies and wings were clearly marked in brilliant colors. But the wings of all of them were drooping as though with weariness, and they looked at Johannes seriously, silently.

"Are there plant-spirits, too, Wistik?"

"Oh, yes, Johannes, but they are very large and vague and elusive. Look! There they come — floating along."

And Wistik pointed out to him the hurrying, hazy figures that Johannes had first seen in front of the procession.

"Now he is coming! Now he is coming! Oh! Oh! Oh!" wailed Wistik, taking off his cap and beginning to cry again.

Surrounded by throngs of weeping nymphs who were singing a soft and sorrowful dirge — their arms intertwined about one another's shoulders — their faded wreaths and long hair dripping with the rain — came the great bier of rude boughs whereon lay Father Pan, hidden beneath ivy and poppies and violets. He was borne by young, brawny-muscled fauns, whose ruddy faces, bowed at their task, were distorted with suppressed sobs. In the rear was a throng of grave centaurs, shuffling mutely along, their heads upon their chests, now and then striking their trunks and flanks with their rough fists, making them sound like drums.

Curled up, as if he intended to stay there, a little squirrel was lying on the hairy breast of Pan. A robin redbreast sat beside his ear, mournfully and patiently coaxing, coaxing incessantly, in the vague hope that he might still hear. But the broad, good-natured face with its kindly smile never stirred.

When Johannes saw that, and recognized his good Father Pan, he burst into tears which he made no effort to restrain.

"Now the monsters are coming," whispered Wistik. "The monsters of the primal world."

Ugh! That was a spectacle to turn one into ice! Dragons, and horrid shapes bigger than ten elephants, with frightful horns and teeth, and armor of spikes; long, powerful necks, having upon them small heads with large, dull eyes and sharp teeth; and pale, grey-green and black, sometimes dark-red or emerald-green, spots on the deeply wrinkled, knotty or shiny skin. All these now went past with awkward jump or trailing body; most of the time mute, but sometimes making a gruff, quickly uttered, far-sounding howl. And then odd creatures like reddish bats, having hooked beaks and curved claws, flashed through the air with their black and yellow wings, chattering and clumsily floundering in their flight.

At last, when the entire multitude had come to the broad, rocky strand, thousands upon thousands of little and big rings were circling over the mirror-like surface of the water, as far as eye could see; swift dolphins sprang in and out of the water, in graceful curves; pointed, dorsal fins of sharks and brown-fish cut the smooth surface swiftly, in straight lines, leaving behind them widely diverging furrows. The mighty heads of shining black whales pushed the water from in front of them, spouting out white streams of vapor with a sound like that of escaping steam.

The sun neared the horizon, the rain ceased falling, and the mists melted away, disclosing other stars. Above the crater of the mountain stretched a dark plume of smoke, and beneath it the fire now glowed calmly, at white heat.

Then all that din of turbulent life grew fainter and fainter, until nothing was audible save a faint sighing and wailing. At last — utter silence.

The bier of Pan was resting upon the seashore, encircled by all the living.

The red rays of the sun lighted up the great corpse, the tree-trunks upon which it rested, and the dark heaps of withered leaves and flowers. But also they shot up the mountain heights, sparkling and flaming in glory there — over the rigid, basaltic rocks.

Wistik stared at the red-reflecting mountain-top, with great, wide-open eyes, and a pale, startled little face, and then cried in a smothered voice:

“Kneel, Johannes, Kneel! She comes! Our holy Mother comes!”

Trembling with awe, Johannes waited expectantly.

He could not begin to comprehend that which he saw. Was it a cloud? a blue-white cloud? But why was it not red, in the glow of that sunset? Was it a glacier? But look! The blue-and-white came falling down like an avalanche of snow. Steel-blue lightning flashed in sharp lines upon the red mountain-side.

Then it seemed to him that the descending vapor was divided. The larger part, and darker — that at the left — was blue, and blue-green; that at the right, a brilliant white.

He saw distinctly now. Two figures were there, in shining, luminous garments; and the light of them was not dimmed by the splendor of that setting sun. Rays of green shone from the garment of the larger, but around the head was an aureole of heavenly blue. The other was clothed in lustrous white.

They were so great — so awful! And they swept from the mountain in an instant of time, as a dove drops from out a tree-top down upon the field!

When they stood beside the bier, Johannes looked into the face of the larger figure, and he felt that it was as near and dear to him as a mother. It was indeed his mother — Mother Earth.

She looked upon the dead, and blessed him. She looked at all the living ones, and mused upon them. Then she looked into the face of the sun ere it disappeared, and smiled.

Turning toward the volcano, she beckoned. The side of the crater burst open with a report like thunder, and a seething stream of lava shot down like lightning.

After that everything was night, and gloom, and darkness to Johannes. He saw the bier on fire — consumed to a pile of burning coals — and the thick, black smoke enveloped him.

But also he saw, last of all, the shining white figure moving beside Mother Earth, irradiating the night and the smoke. He saw Him coming — bending down to him His radiant face until it embraced the entire heavens.

Then he recognized his Guide.

PART III

I

THE warm tears for Father Pan were still flowing down his cheeks, when Johannes lifted up his eyes with the consciousness of being awake. That which met his gaze was exactly what he had last seen — the comforting face of his exalted Brother enveloped by a dun swirl of smoke. But now it looked different, or else it was perceived through another sense — like the same story told in another tongue — like the same music played upon an instrument of different timbre: neither finer nor more effective, but simpler and more sober.

He found himself sitting on the slope of a mountain, and saw Markus bending over him. The sun had set, and the valley lay in twilight, yet in the dusk one could see the glow of fiery furnaces — could see tall factory-chimneys out of whose huge throats there rolled great billows of murky smoke, like dirty wool. The whole valley and everything that grew on the mountain-side was smirched with black. A constant humming and buzzing, pounding and resounding, rose up from that city of bare, blackened buildings. At intervals there flared up from the furnace bluish yellow and violet flames, like glowing, streaming pennants. The land looked gloomy and desolate, as if laid waste by lava; yet now and then, as a rotary oven belched out a flood of brilliant sparks, the grey air was lighted up for miles beyond.

"Markus," said Johannes, his heart still heavy with sorrow, "Pan is dead!"

"Pan is dead!" said Markus in return. "But your Brother lives."

"Thank God for that. What brought you here?"

"I am among the miners, Johannes, and the factory operatives. They need me."

"Oh, my Brother! I too need you. I do not know where in the world to go . . . and Pan is dead!"

Johannes embraced the right arm of Markus, and rested his head against his Brother's shoulder. Thus sitting, he was a long time silent.

He gazed at the clouded valley with its colossal mine-wheel, the black chimneys and ovens, the black, yellow, and blue-white wreaths of vapor, the great iron sheds, and the many-windowed buildings devoid of ornament and color.

All about him he could see the sides of the mountains severed as by great, gaping wounds; the trees prostrate; all nature, with its beautiful verdure, burned to cinders; and the rocks cleft and crushed. Upon the top of the mountain, at the very edge of the chasm — an excavation resembling the hole made by fruit-devouring wasps — several pine-trees were still standing. But these last children of the forest were also soon to fall. And in the distance the echo of explosions reverberated through the mountains, followed by the loud sounds of falling stones, as the rocks were shattered with dynamite.

"Pan is dead!" His beautiful wonderland was being destroyed; and in the new life which was to be founded upon the ruins of the old one, Johannes knew not where to go. He was frightened and bewildered.

But had he not found his Brother again, and for the second time beheld him in a glorified form, clothed in shining raiment? And was he not, even now, in his warm, comforting presence?

The thought of this composed and strengthened Johannes.

"My Brother," he asked, "who killed Pan?"

"No one. His time had come."

"But why, then, was he so sad when I asked him about you?"

"The flower must perish if the fruit is to ripen. A child cries when night comes and it is time to sleep, because he wants to play longer and does not know that rest is better for him. All people who continue to be like children cry about death, which is only a birth and full of joyful anticipations."

"Have Pan and Windekind known you, Brother?"

"No, but they have feared me, as the lesser fears the greater."

"Will your kingdom, then, be more beautiful than theirs?"

"As much more beautiful as the sun is brighter than the moon. But the weak, the frail and timid ones who live in the night-time, will not perceive this, and will fear the glorious sun."

For a long time Johannes thought this over. In the far, smoky valley with its mines and factories, a clock struck — farther away another — in the distance still another. Thereupon followed the shrill screaming of steam-whistles, and the loud clanging of bells, and people could be seen pouring out of the workshops.

"How gloomy!" exclaimed Johannes.

Markus smiled. "The black seed also, in the dark ground, is gloomy, yet it grows to be a glad sunflower."

"Brother," said Johannes, imploringly, "advise me what to do now. The beautiful is of the Father, is it not?"

"Yes, Johannes."

"Then must I not follow after that which is the most beautiful of all I have found in this human world? Do tell me!"

"I only tell you to follow the Father's voice where it seems to call you most clearly."

"And what if I am in doubt?"

"Then you must question, fervently, and, still as a flower, listen with all your heart."

"But if I must act?"

"Then do not for an instant hesitate, but venture in the name of the Father, trusting in your own and His love, which is one and the same."

"Then suppose I make a mistake?"

"You might do that; but if the error is for His sake, He will open your understanding. Only when you fear for your own sake, and forget Him, can you be lost."

"Show me then, Brother, what *your* way is!"

"Very well, Johannes. Come with me."

Together they descended to the valley. The ground was

everywhere black — black with coal and slag and ashes, and the puddles of water were like ink.

From all sides came the sound of heavy footfalls. It seemed as if the black town would empty itself of all its people. Hundreds of men ran hither and thither, all of them with heavy, weary, yet hurried steps. Apparently, they were all running over one another — each one in the others' way — but yet there was no disorder, for each seemed to know where he wished to go.

Most of them looked black — completely begrimed with coal and smoke. Their hats and blouses were shiny with blackish water. Usually they were silent; but now and then they called to one another roughly and to the point, as men do who have spent all their strength, and have none left for talking or jesting.

Several were already leaving the wash-houses, cleansed and in their customary sober garments. Their freshly washed faces looked conspicuously pale in the twilight, amid those of their unwashed comrades; but their eyes bore dark rims that could not be cleaned.

Johannes and Markus went past the mines, the coal pits, and the smelting works, until they came to long rows of little houses where the families of the laborers lived. Thitherward also the people were now streaming. Behind the small windows where wives were waiting with supper, little lights began to twinkle everywhere.

Markus and Johannes entered a large, dreary hall having a low wooden ceiling. In the front part of it two lighted gas-jets were flickering. The rest of the place was in semi-darkness. There were a good many benches, but no one had yet arrived. The walls were bare and besmirched, and upon them were several mottoes and placards.

For a half-hour the two sat there without speaking. A dismal impression of the gloom and ugliness of this abode took possession of Johannes. It was worse than the tedium of the schoolhouse. It seemed more frightful to have to live

here than in the wildest and most desolate spot in Pan's dominion. There it was always beautiful and grandiose, though often also terrible. Here all was cramped, uninteresting, bare, and ugly — the horrors of a nightmare, the most frightful Johannes had ever known.

This lasted an hour, and then the great hall gradually filled with laborers. They came sauntering in, somewhat embarrassed, pipes in their mouths, hat or cap on head. At first they remained in the dark background; then, seating themselves here and there upon the benches, they glanced to right and left and backward, occasionally expectorating upon the floor. Their faces looked dull and tired, and the hands of most of them — rough and broad, with black-rimmed nails — hung down open. They talked in an undertone, at times laughing a little. Women also came in with children in their arms. Some were still fresh and young, with a bit of color about their apparel; some, delicate little mothers in a decline, with deformed bodies, sharp noses, pale cheeks, and hollow eyes. Others were coarse vixens, with hard, selfish looks and ways.

The hall filled, and the rows of faces peered through the tobacco smoke, watching and waiting for what was to take place.

A laborer — a large, robust red-bearded man — came forward under the gaslight, and began to speak. He stammered at first, and pushed his right arm through the air as if he were pumping out the words. But gradually he grew more fluent; and the hundreds of faces in the hall followed his attitudes and gestures with breathless interest, until one could see his anger and his laughter reflected as if in a mirror. And when he broke off a sentence with a sharp, explosive inquiry, then the feet began to shuffle and stamp with a noise which sometimes swelled to thunder, in the midst of which could be heard cries of "Yes! Yes!" while laughing faces, and looks full of meaning, were turned hither and thither as if searching for, and evincing, approval.

Johannes did not very well understand what was said. He had, indeed, learned German; but that did not avail him much here, on account of the volubility of the speaker and his use of popular idioms. His attention, too, was given as much to the listeners as to the speaker.

Nevertheless, the great cause which was being agitated grew more and more clear to him.

The speaker's enthusiasm was communicated to his audience, becoming intensified a hundred-fold, until a great wave of emotion swept over all present, Johannes included.

He saw faces grow paler, and observed signs of heightened interest. Eyes began to glisten more and more brightly, and lips were moving involuntarily. Now and then a child began to whimper. But it disturbed no one. On the contrary, the orator appeared to utilize the occurrence for his own purposes. Two tears rolling down the ruddy moustache riveted Johannes' attention, and he heard a quiver in the rough voice as the speaker pointed with both hands toward the wailing infant, in such a way as to remove from the incident all that was comic or annoying.

It was apparent to Johannes that these people suffered an injustice; that they were about to resist; and that this resistance was perilous — yes, very perilous — to the point of involving their lives and their subsistence, and also that of their wives and children.

He could see the evidences of long-suffered injustice, in their passionate looks and eager gestures. He saw breathless fear at the thought of the danger which menaced them and their dear ones if they should offer resistance. He saw the proud glitter in their eyes, and the high-spirited lifting of their heads as the inner struggle was decided, and heroism triumphed over fear. They would fight — they knew it now. The great rising wave of courage and ardor left no irresolute one unmoved. Johannes looked the faces over very carefully, but there was not one upon which he could still read the

traces of anxiety and hesitation. One kindled soul illuminated them all, like a mighty fire.

Then Johannes' soul grew ardent, and he too waxed strong at heart; for there began to touch him the first rays of the beauty which lay slumbering beneath that sombre veil of ugliness.

After this speaker there were others, who rose in their places without coming forward. Not one of them hazarded the quenching of the sacred fire. They all spoke of the coming struggle as of an inevitable event. But Johannes, with a sensation that made him clench his fists as if the enemy's hand were already at his throat, now saw a heavy, burly fellow stop, stammering, in the middle of his speech, and begin to sob; not from fear — no! — but from keen anger, on account of suffered scorn and humiliation, and because of the insupportable suspicion that he had been disloyal to his comrades. Johannes guessed the details of that story, even although he did not understand the words. The man had been deceived; and, in a time of deep misery, when his wife was ill, he had been seduced, by promises, from joining his comrades in this struggle.

Johannes was glad to see actions, fine in themselves, proceed from a burst of pure emotion, when the whole earnest assemblage, in one unanimous spirit of generosity, forgave the seeming traitor, and reinstated him in their regard.

And as the workmen were about to take their leave, with the stern yet cheerful earnestness of those who are committed to a righteous struggle, Johannes saw, with great pleasure, that Markus was going to speak. They knew him, and instantly there was absolute silence. There was something in the pleased readiness with which these German miners took their places again to listen — a childlike trust, and a good-natured seriousness — that Johannes had never seen among the Fair-people; no, nor anywhere in his own country.

As Markus spoke German with the careful slowness and the purity of one who did not belong to the land, Johannes understood it all.

"My friends," said Markus, "you have been taught in your schools and churches of a Spirit of Truth, which was to come as the Comforter of mankind.

"Well, then, this which has now taken possession of you, and which has strengthened all your hearts and brightened all your eyes — even this is the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost.

"For Truth and Righteousness are *one*, and proceed from One. From your cheerful and courageous eyes I see that you know surely, with a full conscience, that it is the truth which has stirred you, and that you are to risk your lives in the cause of justice.

"And that this spirit is a Comforter you will find by experience; that is, if you are loyal.

"But this I now say to you, because you do not know as I know, that truth is like a mountain-path between two abysses, and that it is more difficult to maintain than the tone of a violin.

"You have suffered injustice; but you have also committed injustice. For the act of oppression is injustice, and it is also injustice to permit oppression.

"You have been taught otherwise, and have been told it is written that injustice will be permitted. But even if this were written, the Spirit of Truth would cause it to be erased. I say to you that whoever practices injustice is an evildoer, and whoever permits injustice is his accomplice.

"There is a pride which in God's eyes is an honor to a man, and there is also an arrogance which will cause him to stumble and to be crushed.

"The Spirit of Truth says this: 'Acquaint yourselves with your own value, and endure no slight which is hostile to the truth.' But he who overestimates himself will have a fall, and God will not lift him up."

After these powerful and penetrating words, which sounded like a threatening admonition, Markus sat down, resting his head upon his hand. After waiting awhile in silence, the whispering crowd dispersed with shuffling footsteps, without having made a sign of approval or acquiescence.

"May I stay with you, Markus?" asked Johannes, softly, afraid of disturbing his guide. Markus looked up kindly.

"How about your little comrade?" he asked. "Would she not grow uneasy? Come with me. I will show you the way back again."

Together they found the way in the night through the woods to the little resort and the lodging-house. But excepting an exchange of "Good-nights" not another word was spoken. In his great awe of him, Johannes dared not ask Markus how he knew all about his adventures.

II

THE next morning, in the dirty little breakfast-room of the lodging-house, there mingled with the usual smell of fresh coffee and stale tobacco smoke the fragrance of wood-violets and of musk; for a pale lavender note, written with blue ink, was awaiting Johannes.

He opened it, and read the following:

“DEARLY BELOVED SOUL-BROTHER:

Come to me to-day as soon as you can, upon the wings of our poet-friendship. Countess Dolores went yesterday, with her little daughters, and her servants; but she left something for you which will make you happy, and which I myself will place in your hand.

The following is the first delicate and downy fruit of our union of souls:

HYMEN MYSTICUM

TO LITTLE JOHANNES

In solemn state swim our two souls,
Like night-black, mystic swans,
O'er passion-seas profoundly deep —
Of briny, melancholy tears.

Oh! Thou supremely bitter ocean!
All wingless, bear we with us, thro' the sky's dark
courses,
Thy ceaseless, lily-sorrow —
And the fell weight of this sad world's woe.

Entwine with mine thy slender throat, my brother,
That, swooning, we may farther swim,
And with our song the dazzled race amaze.

Let us, in sensuous tenderness,
Like faded lilies intertwine,
With a death-sob of supremest ecstasy.

Would not your friend be able to compose music for this?
And I hope soon to know her better.

Your soul's kinsman,

WALTER V. L. T. D.

Kurbotel, 8th Sept.

(Van Lieverlee tot Endegeest).

Just here, I wish I could say that Johannes immediately let Marjon read both the letter and the verses, and that, with her, he made merry over them. But that, alas! the truth will not permit. And now, for the sake of my small hero, I confess I should be heartily ashamed if I thought that none of you, in reading the above, would be as ingenuous as he was, in regarding the poem with the utmost seriousness — even hesitating, like himself, to doubt its quality, concluding that it must indeed be fine though a little too high for understanding, and, for that very reason, not at first sight so very striking and intelligible.

Are you certain that none of you would have been so stupid as to be deceived by it? Quite certain? Well, then, please do not forget how youthful Johannes still was; and consider, also, the wonderful progress of the age, due, no doubt, to the zealous and untiring efforts of our numerous literary critics.

Johannes did not mention the letter; but when he saw Marjon, he said:

"I saw somebody, yesterday. Can you think who it was?"

Marjon's pale, dull face lighted up suddenly, and she stared at Johannes with fixed, bright eyes.

"Markus!" said she. Johannes nodded assent, and she continued:

"Thank God! I felt it. I heard that the laborers about here were soon to go on a strike, and then I supposed — well — Now everything will be all right again!"

Then she was silent, eating her bread contentedly. A little later, she asked:

"Where are you going? Is it far? What have you agreed to do?"

"I have settled nothing," said Johannes. "But I will go to him with you before long. It is not far." Then, affecting to make light of it, he said: "I have had an invitation to the hotel."

"Gracious!" said Marjon, under her breath. "The deuce is to pay again."

In the park Johannes met Mijnheer van Lieverlee. He stood on the grass in front of a thicket of withered shrubs, gazing at the mountains; and was clad in cream-white flannel, with a bright-purple silk handkerchief in his breast pocket. One hand rested upon his ebony walking-stick; with the other — thumb and forefinger pressed together, and little finger extended — he was making rhythmical movements in the air.

When he saw Johannes, he greeted him with a nod and a wink, as if there were a secret understanding between them.

"Superb! Is it not? Superb!"

Johannes did not exactly know what he meant — the verses he had received, the mountains opposite, or the fine, September morning. He selected the most obvious, and said:

"Yes, sir! Glorious weather!"

Van Lieverlee gave him a keen look, as if uncertain whether or not he was being made sport of, and then leisurely remarked:

"You do not appear to be impressed by the combination of white, mauve, and golden brown."

Johannes thought himself very sensitive to the effect of color; so he felt ashamed of not having noticed the color-composition. He saw it now, fully — the white flannel, the purple pocket-handkerchief, and the faded, yellow-brown shrub. That Van Lieverlee should thus include himself in this symphony of color seemed to him in the highest degree pertinent.

"I was engaged in making a 'pantoem' in harmony with that color-scheme," said Van Lieverlee; and then, seeing the blank look on Johannes' face, he added, "Do you know what a 'pantoem' is?"

"I do not, sir."

"Oh, boy! boy! and you call yourself a poet! What did you receive this morning? Do you know what *that* is?"

"A sonnet," said Johannes, eagerly.

"Is that so? Did you think it a fine one?"

That was a disquieting question. Johannes was quite at a loss about it; but it seemed that poets were wont to ask such questions, so he overcame what he considered his childishness, and said:

"I think it is splendid!"

"You think so! Well, I *know* it. There is no need to make a secret of it. I call what is good, *good*, whether it was I who made it, or somebody else."

That seemed both just and true to Johannes. Now that he was again with Van Lieverlee, and heard him talk in such a grand style, with that easy, fluent enunciation, and those elegant gestures, he found him, on the whole, not bad, but, on the contrary, attractive and admirable. He knew that Marjon would think otherwise; but his confidence in her judgment declined as his confidence in Van Lieverlee augmented.

"Now, Johannes, I have something for you which ought to make you very happy," said Van Lieverlee, at the same time taking from a pretty, red portfolio, that smelled delightfully like Russia leather, a note embellished with a crown and sealed with blue wax. "This was written by Countess Dolores with her own hand, and I know what it contains. Treat it with respect."

Before handing it over to him, Van Lieverlee, with a sweeping flourish, pressed it to his own lips. Johannes felt himself to be a dolt; for he knew it would be an impossibility for him to imitate that.

The note contained a very brief, though cordial, invitation to stay at her home sometime, when she should be with her children, at her country-seat in England. There was, too, within the note, a pretty bit of paper. Johannes had never seen its like. It meant money.

"How kind of her!" he exclaimed rapturously. He felt greatly honored. Immediately, however, his thoughts turned toward Markus — toward Marjon and Keesje. How about them? Something must be done about it; to decline was impossible.

"Well?" said Van Lieverlee. "You do not appear to be half pleased about it. Or do not you believe it yet? It really is not a joke!"

"Oh, no!" said Johannes. "I know it is not . . . but. . . ."

"Your friend may go with you, you know; or does she not care to?"

"I have not asked her yet," said Johannes, "for, you see, we have . . . we have finally found him."

"What do you mean? What are you talking about? Speak out plainly, boy. You need never keep secrets from me."

"It is no secret, sir," said Johannes, greatly embarrassed.

"Then why are you stuttering so? And why do you say 'sir'? Did I not write you my name? Or do you reject my offer of brotherhood?"

"I will accept it, gladly, but I have still another brother that I think a great deal of. It is he whom we are seeking — my comrade and I. And now we have found him."

"A real, ordinary brother?"

"Oh, no!" said Johannes. And then, after a moment of hesitation, softly, but with emphasis, "It is . . . Markus . . . Do you know whom I mean?"

"Markus? Who is Markus?" asked Van Lieverlee, with some impatience, as if completely mystified.

"I do not know who he is," replied Johannes, in a baffled

manner. "I hoped that you might know because you are so clever, and have seen so much."

Then he related what had happened to him after he had fallen in with the dark figure, on the way to the city where mankind was — with its sorrows.

Van Lieverlee listened, staring into space at first, with a rather incredulous and impatient countenance, now and then giving Johannes a scrutinizing look. At last he smiled.

Then, slowly and decisively, he said, "It is very clear who he is."

"Who is he?" asked Johannes in breathless expectancy.

"Well, a Mahatma, of course — a member of the sacred brotherhood from Thibet. We will surely introduce him, also, to the Pleiades. He will feel quite at home there."

That sounded very pleasing and reassuring. Was the great enigma about to be solved now, and every trouble smoothed away?

"But," said Johannes, hesitating, "Markus feels really at home only when he is among poor and neglected people — Kermis-folk, and working men. He looks like a laborer, too — almost like a tramp — he is so very poor. I never look at him without wanting to cry. He is very different from you — utterly unlike!"

"That is nothing. That does not signify," said Van Lieverlee, with an impatient toss of his head. "He dissembles."

"Then you, also, think . . ." said Johannes, hesitating, and resuming with an effort, "You think, Walter, that the poor are downtrodden, and that there is injustice in wealth?"

Van Lieverlee threw back his head, and made a sweeping gesture with his right arm.

"My dear boy, there is no need for you to enlighten me upon that subject. I was a socialist before you began to think. It is very natural for any kind-hearted man to begin with such childish fancies. The poor are imposed upon, and the rich are at fault. Every newsboy, nowadays, knows

that. But when one grows somewhat older, and gets to behold things from an esoteric standpoint, the matter is not so simple."

"There you are," thought Johannes. "As Markus told it, it was much too simple to be true."

"Do not forget," resumed Van Lieverlee, "that we all come into the world with an individual Karma. Nothing can alter it. Each one must bring with him his past, and either expiate or else enjoy it. We all receive an appointed task which we are obliged to perform. The poor and downtrodden must attribute their sad fate to the inevitable outcome of former deeds; and the trials they endure are the best medium for their purification and absolution. There are others, on the contrary, who behold their course in life more clear and smooth because their hardest struggles lie behind them. I really sympathize deeply with the unhappy proletarian; but I do not on that account venture to lower myself to his pitiful condition. The Powers hold him there, and me here — each at his post. He still needs material misery to make him wiser. I need it no longer, because I have learned enough in former incarnations. My task, instead, is the elevation, refinement, and preservation of the beautiful. Therefore I am assigned to a more privileged position. I am a watchman in the high domain of Art. This must be kept pure and undefiled in the great, miry medley of coarse, rude, and apathetic people who compose the greater part of mankind. This cultivation of the beautiful is my sacred duty. To it I must devote myself in all possible ways, and for all time. The beautiful! The beautiful! in its highest refinement — sleeping or waking — in voice, in movement, in food, and in clothing! That is my existence, and to it I must subordinate everything else."

This oration Van Lieverlee delivered with great emphasis while slowly moving forward over the short, smooth grass, accompanying the cadences of the well-chosen sentences with wide time-beats of the ebony walking-stick.

Johannes was convinced — to such a degree that he perceived in it naught else than the complement and completion of that which Markus, up to the present, had taught him.

Yes, he might go to his children now. He was sure of it. Markus would approve.

"I wish that Marjon might hear you — just once," said he.

"Marjon? Is that your comrade? Then why does he not come? Bless me! It was a girl, though, truly! What *are* you to each other?"

Van Lieverlee stopped, and, stroking his small, flaxen beard gave Johannes another keen look.

"Do you not really think, Johannes," he proceeded, with significant glances, and in a judicial tone, "do you not think . . . h'm . . . to put it mildly, that you are rather free and easy?"

"What do you mean?" asked Johannes, looking straight at him, unsuspiciously.

"You are a sly little customer, and you know remarkably well how to conduct yourself; but there is not a bit of need for your troubling yourself about me. I am not one of the narrow-minded, every-day sort of people. Such things are nothing to me — no more than a dry leaf. I only wish you to bear in mind the difficulties. We must not expose our esoteric position. There are too many who understand nothing about it, and would get us into all kinds of difficulties. Countess Dolores, for example, is still very backward in *that* respect."

Johannes understood next to nothing of this harangue, but he was afraid of being taken for a fool if he let it be evident. So he ventured the remark:

"I will do my best."

Van Lieverlee burst out laughing, and Johannes laughed with him, pleased that he appeared to have said something smart. Thereupon he took his leave, and went to look up Marjon, that they might go to the city of the miners.

III

THE walls of the little house were much thicker than those of the houses of Dutch laborers. The small sashes, curtained with white muslin, lay deep in the window-openings, and upon each broad sill stood a flowering plant and a begonia.

When Johannes and Marjon looked in through the window, Markus was sitting at the table. The housewife stood beside him, sleeves tucked up, carrying on her left arm a half-sleeping child, while with her right hand she was putting food upon his plate. A somewhat older child stood by his knee watching the steaming food.

The mother's cheeks were pale and sunken, from sorrow, and her eyes were still full of tears.

"Nothing will come of it, after all," she said with a sigh. "If only he had been wiser! Those miserable roysterers have talked him into it. That's what comes of those meetings. If only he had stayed at home! The husband belongs at home."

"Do not be afraid, mother," said Markus. "He did what he sincerely thought was right. Who does that can always be at peace."

"Although he should starve?" asked the wife, bitterly.

"Yes, although he should starve. It is better to starve with a good conscience, than to live in comfort by fraud."

This silenced the woman for a time. Then she said, "If it were not for the children . . ." and the tears flowed faster.

"It is exactly on account of the children, mother. If the children are good, they will thank the father who is struggling for their sakes, even though he struggle in vain. And there is something for them still, else you would not have been able to give to me — the stranger."

Markus looked at her smilingly, and she smiled in return.

"You — you should have our last mouthfull!" said she, heartily. Then, glancing toward the window, she added: "Who are those young scamps looking in? And a *monkey* with them!"

Then Markus turned around. As soon as the two standing outside recognized his face, they shouted "Hurrah!" and rushed in without knocking.

Marjon flew to Markus, threw her arms about his neck, and kissed him. Johannes, rather more shy, clung to his hand. Keesje, being distrustful of the children, peered around the place with careful scrutiny.

Then there followed in Dutch a brisk, confused interchange of information. All the adventures had to be narrated, and Marjon was very happy and communicative. The mother kept still, looking on with a discontented air, full of her own troubles. The noise awakened the half-slumbering child, and it began to cry.

Then the husband came home, morose and irritable.

"What confounded business is this?" he cried; and the two were silent, slowly comprehending that they were in a dwelling full of care. Johannes looked earnestly at the weary, care-seamed face of the man, and the pale, anxious features of the mother, wondering if there was any news.

"Hollanders?" asked the miner, seating himself at the table, and holding up a plate.

"Yes, friends of Markus," replied the wife. Then, in assumed calmness, she asked: "Is there any news?"

"We have the best of it!" said the husband, with forced cheerfulness. "We win — we surely win. It can't be otherwise. What have you to say about it, Markus?"

But Markus was silent, and gazing out-of-doors. Swearing because the food was not to his taste, the man then began to eat. Marjon's merriment subsided. The wife shook her head sadly, and kissed her child.

"You need to look out, you young rascals," said the man, all at once. "They are searching for you. Have

you been pilfering? Which of you is the girl in disguise?"

"I am!" said Marjon. "What do they want of me? Now what if I have no other duds?"

"Are you a girl?" asked the wife. "Shame on you!"

"Has not Vrouw Huber a spare garment for her?" asked Markus. "She has so many daughters!"

"We may need to pawn them all," replied the wife. But Johannes, with a manly bearing, cried: "We can pay for them. I have some money!"

"O-o-oh!" said the others doubtfully, while Markus simply smiled. Thus Marjon was soon back again in her girl's apparel — an ugly red-checked little frock. Keesje alone was satisfied with the change.

"Have you been singing much?" asked Markus.

"Yes, we sing every day," said Marjon, "and Johannes has made some nice new songs."

"That is good," said Markus. Then, turning to husband and wife: "May they sing here a little?"

"Sing! A pretty time for singing!" said the wife, scornfully.

"Why not?" asked the husband. "A nice song is never out of place."

"You are right," said Markus. "It is not well to hear nothing but sighs."

Marjon softly tuned her guitar; and while the husband sat beside the brick stove, smoking his pipe, and the wife laid her little one in bed, the two children began to sing a song — the last of those they had made together. It was a melancholy little song, as were all those they had sung during the last weeks. These were the words:

"If I should say what makes me sad,
My effort would be all in vain;
But nightingales and roses glad
They whisper it in sweet refrain.

"The evening zephyr softly sighs
In strains one clearly understands;
I see it traced high o'er the skies
In writing made by mystic hands.

"I know a land where every grief
Is changed into a mellow song;
Where roses heal with blushing lips
All wounds and every aching wrong.

"That land, though not so far away,
I may not, cannot enter there;
It is not here where now I stay
And no one saves me from despair."

"Is that Dutch, now?" asked the miner. "I can't understand a bit of it? Can you, wife?"

Weeping, the wife shook her head.

"Then what are you snivelling for, if you don't understand?"

"I don't understand it at all; but it makes me cry, and that does me good," said the wife.

"All right, then! If it does you good we'll have it once more." And the children sang it over again.

When they went away, they left the family in a more peaceful mood.

Markus took his place in the middle, between the two children, Keesje sitting upon his shoulder, with one little hand resting confidently on his cap, attentively studying the thick, dark hair at his temples.

"Markus!" said Johannes. "I do not understand it. Really, what has my grief to do with theirs? And yet, it did seem as if they were crying over my verses. But my little griefs are of so little account, while they are anxious about things so much more important."



"I understand, perfectly," said Marjon. "Awhile ago, they might beat me as hard as they pleased, and I wouldn't utter a sound. But once, when they had given me a hard whipping, I saw a forlorn little kitten that looked quite as unhappy as I was, and then I began to cry with all my might, and it made me feel better."

"Then you think, children, that all sorrow suffered is one single sorrow? But so is all happiness one happiness. The Father suffers with everything, and whoever comforts a poor little kitten, comforts the Father."

These sayings made things more plain to Johannes, and gave him much to ponder over. He forgot everything else, until they were again in their lodgings — two little rooms in an old, unoccupied mill. Here they were given some bed-clothes, by a girl from a near-by lodging-house. Marjon now slept apart, while Johannes and Markus stayed together, in one room.

The next morning, while they were drinking coffee in the dark little bar-room of the lodging-house, Johannes felt he must speak of what lay on his heart. He brought out the fragrant, violet-colored note, also the one adorned with the crown and the blue sealing-wax; but in his diffidence even his hope of an understanding with Markus drooped again.

"I smell it already!" cried Marjon. "That's the hair-dresser scent of that fop, with his tufted top-piece."

That angered Johannes. "Don't you wish you could make such poems as that 'fop' can?"

And, nettled by this disrespect of his new friend, he sprang to his feet, and began excitedly repeating the verses. He had his trouble for his pains. Markus listened with unmoved countenance, and Marjon, somewhat taken aback, looked at Markus. But the latter said not a word.

"I'll tell you what," she exclaimed at last, "I don't believe a bit of it! Not a darn bit."

"Then I'll tell you," retorted Johannes, sharply, "that

you are too rude and coarse to understand things that are elevated."

"Maybe I am," said Marjon in her coolest, most indifferent manner.

Then Johannes spoke to Markus alone, hoping for an understanding from him. What he said came out passionately, as if it had long been repressed, and his voice trembled with ready tears.

"I have thought for a long, long time, Markus, that there was no use in trying. I cannot bear anything rude and rough, and everything I have yet seen in people *is* rude and rough — neither good nor beautiful. It cannot be that the Father meant it to be so. And now that I have found something fine, and exquisite, and noble, ought I not to follow it? I had not thought that there were anywhere such beautiful human beings. Markus, they are the most beautiful of all I have ever seen. Their hair is like gold, Markus. Not even the elves have more beautiful hair. And their little feet are so slim, and their throats so slender! I cannot help thinking of them all the time — of the pretty, proud way they raise their heads, of their sensitive lips, of the beautiful, upturned curves at the corners of their mouths, and of the music in their voices when they ask me anything. They danced together to the music, hand in hand, and then their nice smooth stockings peeped out, together, from under their little velvet dresses. It made me dizzy. One of them has blue eyes, and fuller, redder lips. She is the gentler and more innocent. The other has greyer, more mischievous eyes, and a smaller mouth. She is more knowing and roguish. She is the fairer, and she has little fine freckles just under her eyes. And you ought to see them when they run up to their mother, one on each side, when all their hair tumbles down over her, in two shades of gold—brown gold and light gold—that ripples together like a flowing river! And I saw the diamonds in their mother's neck, sparkling through it all! You ought to hear them speak English — so smoothly and purely. But they speak

Dutch, too, and I would much rather hear that. One of them—the innocent one—lisps a little. She has the darkest hair, with the most beautiful waves in it. But I could talk more easily with the other one. She is more intelligent. And the mother, also, is so attractive in every way. Everything she says is fine and noble, and every movement is charming. You have a feeling that she stands far, far above you, and yet she acts in everything as if she were the least of all. Isn't that lovely, Markus? Is it not the way it should be?"

Markus made no reply, but looked straight at him, very seriously, and with a puzzling expression. It was kind, but wholly incomprehensible to Johannes.

In his excitement Johannes kept on: "I have just come into a consciousness now of something in the world of people, of which I knew nothing whatever before. My friend Walter, the one who made that poem, lives in that world. She—" pointing to Marjon—"has no idea of it. That is not her fault. I had no idea of it before. But I am not surly, like her; I do not scoff at it just because I do not belong there yet. It is a world of beauty and refinement—a sublime world of poetry and art. Walter wishes to lead me into it, and I think it silly in her now to jeer about it. Do you not think it silly, Markus?"

Markus' eyes remained as serious and puzzling as ever, and his mouth uttered not a word. Johannes looked first at one, then at the other, for an answer to his question.

At last Markus said: "What does Marjon say?"

Marjon, who had been leaning forward as she sat, lifted up her head. She no longer looked indifferent. Her cheeks were glowing, and her eyes, with their dry, red rims, seemed to be afire. She stared with the fixed, glittering look of one in a fever, and said:

"What do I say? I have nothing to say. He thinks me too rude and rough. Possibly I am. I swear sometimes, and Keesje smells. I can't endure those people, and they don't want anything to do with me—certainly not with Kees.

As Jo has need of finer companionship now, he must choose for himself."

"No, Marjon, you do not understand me; or do you not wish to understand?" said Johannes, sadly. "It is not because I have need of it, but because it is good. It is good to enter a finer life — into a more elevated world. Is it not so, Markus? You understand me, do you not?"

"I understand," said Markus.

"Tell her, then, that she must come too — that it would be better so."

"I don't think it would be better," said Marjon, "and I'm certainly not going with you."

"Tell us, then, Markus, while we have you with us — tell us what we ought to do. We will do as you say."

"I don't know yet whether I will or not," said Marjon.

Then Markus smiled, and nodding toward Marjon, he said: "Look! She knows already we must not promise obedience to any one. Let him who promises obedience promise it to the Father."

"But you are so much wiser than we are, Markus."

"Is it enough that I am wiser, Johannes? Do you not wish to become wiser yourself? Because I can run better, ought you to let me carry you? How will you ever learn to run, yourself?"

Marjon stared at him fixedly, with her flashing, flaming eyes, while two red spots burned upon her pale cheeks. She stepped up to Markus and pressed her hand upon his mouth, exclaiming passionately:

"Do not say it! I know what you are going to say. Don't say it; for then he will do it, and he must not! he *must* not!"

Then she hid her face on Markus' arm. Markus laid his hand upon her head and spoke to her tenderly:

"Are you not willing, then, to grant him what you yourself demand — that he should be doing what he himself, not some one else, thinks right?"

Marjon looked up. Her eyes were tearless. Johannes listened quietly, and Markus continued:

"There are frightful events, children, but most of them are not so bad as they seem to be. The fear of them, only, is bad. But the only events that you should dread come through not doing what you yourself think right — *yourself*, children — yourself alone, with the Father. The Father speaks to us also through men, and through their wise words. But they are indirect vehicles; we have Him within ourselves — directly — just as you, Marjon, are now resting upon my bosom. He wills it to be so, and there we must seek him — more and more.

"Now there is a great deal of self-deception. Self is a long while blind and deaf, and we often mistake the Devil's voice for the voice of God, and take the Enemy to be the Father. But whoever is too fearful of straying never leaves his place, and fails to find the right way. A swimmer who dares not release his hold upon another — will drown when in peril. Dare then, children, to release your hold upon others — all — all — to follow the Father's voice as it speaks within yourselves. Let all who will, call evil what seems to yourselves good. Do this, and the Father will not be ashamed of you."

"But understand me well; close your ears to no one, for the truth comes from all sides, and God speaks everywhere. Ask the opinion of others, but ask no one else to judge for you."

They were all silent for awhile. At last Marjon stood up, slowly, with averted face, and flinging back her short, ash-blond hair from her forehead, she stepped up to Keesje, who, fastened to a chain, sat shelling nuts. She loosened his chain, and said gently and affectionately: "Coming with me, Kees? I know very well what is going to happen now." Then she had him leap to her shoulder, and, without once looking round, she went out into the street.

"Do you also know, Johannes?" asked Markus.

"Yes!" said Johannes, resolutely, "I am going!"

IV

AND so Little Johannes took leave again of his Guide and of his friend, and went forth to seek a finer and a nobler sphere of life.

He did not do this now in a heedless way, as when first he left his father, and, afterward, Windekind; nor partly by compulsion, as when he chose Vrede-best rather than the gypsy-wagon.

He was acting now quite voluntarily, according to his own ideas — not recklessly, but in harmony with his convictions. Ought we not to admit that he was making good progress? Indeed, he thought so himself.

How well he recollected his first talk with Markus, during the storm, about remembering and forgetting! What he was now doing, however, did not seem to him disloyal. True, he was turning away from friends, but he was following that which he took to be the mind of his dearest friend, even as Markus had taught him.

He was resolved to combat the sorrows of humanity. But first of all, he must become a good man himself, and he agreed with Van Lieverlee that it was the proper thing for a good man to be also a clever one, and to live a fine life.

Hitherto, there had been too little of that which was beautiful around him. With regard to his face, he had a vague idea that it was plain. But that he could not very well help. All the more, it behooved him to have a care for his clothes. Every flower and every bird presented a more comely appearance than did he. His cap and jacket were formless, ragged, and rain-spotted. His shoes were worn and out of shape. And while so attired, the thought of becoming the guest of a countess, and of appearing beside Van Lieverlee, was not a little distressing.

Happily, he now possessed a little money — not much, to

be sure, for he had his traveling expenses to meet, but yet he could spare a little for a few purchases. And that was a serious question for Johannes, involving much thought — how he could array himself the most finely, at the least cost.

He first bought a white, starched "dicky," and with it a ready-made tie — black — not venturing, when he thought of Van Lieverlee's gorgeous cravats, to select a colored one. Then for his dicky he selected studs with little green stones in them. They looked like emeralds, but they were only green glass. The studs were not a necessity, for the dicky fastened at the back. But their modest twinkling simply attested his toleration of outward adornment. He bought also a stiff, round hat, a cloak, and a pair of new shoes. That the shoes pinched and pained him was a small matter. He was pleased at the odor of new leather which they spread around, and liked their loud squeaking still better.

They did not squeak at first, to his distinct disappointment; but after an hour or two — there it was! They began to creak and squeak, as if proclaiming to everybody that from this day forward he became part of the higher life, and one of the finer sort of human beings.

Finally — a pair of kid gloves! But these he dared not put on after he had them. As little did he dare leave them off, for they had cost a good deal, and the money must not be thrown away. So he settled the question by wearing one and carrying the other. He seemed, indeed, to remember that this was the mode.

And a traveling-bag now seemed to him the ideal — the acme — of dignity. But he had nothing to put into it. To buy more for the mere sake of filling it was not to be thought of, and to carry it for the mere sake of appearances ran counter to his ideas of sincerity and honesty. Aunt Seréna's old satchel he left behind with Marjon.

The leave-taking was not hard for him. No, indeed! He was too full of the new life which awaited him. Never had he felt more fully convinced that he was taking the right path — that he was going to do the right thing.

Markus had said that we must seek for happiness and prosperity, as well as for goodness. Johannes felt happier than he ever had felt since leaving Windekind. Did not that prove that he was in the right way?

And what was the Father's voice of which Markus had spoken, if not this inner joy? It was not, however, the audible, usual voice, sounding in Dutch, or some other tongue. The Bible, indeed, said so; but that was not now the way. Surely, then, it must be this feeling of joy and of glad anticipation that he now experienced.

Does it not seem to you that Johannes had advanced? I do not believe that you would have reasoned better than he did. And if you were not taken in as he was, it would have been more from good luck than from wisdom.

At first Van Lieverlee had promised to accompany him; but at the last moment, without giving a reason, he wrote to recall his promise, and let Johannes go alone.

In the corner of a third-class railway coach, among a strange people, he sped through a foreign country. He was at rest and contented, because he was going to the two children. It was as great a pleasure to him as if he had been traveling to the home of his parents. Where those dear, beautiful little beings were, there was his home. He looked at the foreigners with interest. They seemed less coarse and clownish, less ugly and unmannerly, than his own people. They were much more merry and agreeable, also more obliging to one another. Johannes was on the alert for an occasion to do the polite thing. However, as he did not speak the language very fluently, he sat in his corner wrapped in his cloak, listening quietly, and in a friendly mood, to the scraps of conversation that came to him. This was carried on in the rattling, jolting car, with loud laughter and vehement gesticulations.

At night he slept once more on the leather-covered benches of a boat. This time it was not on the smooth Rhine, but on the mighty, swelling ocean. All around him were people to whom he had nothing to say. Only, his neighbor on the

leather bench requested him not to kick his head. Then he made himself as small as possible, and lay farther away, and quite still.

About midnight he took a peep around the cabin, hardly knowing whether or not he had been asleep.

The people lay at rest. Most of them appeared to be asleep — some making queer noises. The light was dim, and, in the semi-darkness, the lamps swung mysteriously to and fro, and the plants that stood upon the table were all of them quivering. One could hear, above the soft jingling and creaking everywhere, the quaking and dull throbbing of the engines. Outside, the water was hissing and rushing, and dashing along the sides of the vessel.

Beside the table sat a lone passenger — a tall, dark figure. He was motionless, his head resting upon his hand.

Johannes gave him a good look. He seemed to have on an amazingly big, spacious cloak, full of folds; on his head was a broad-brimmed hat. The one hand which Johannes could distinguish looked very thin and white.

How familiar the man looked, though! Johannes expected immediately to hear the sound of a well-known voice. He thought of Markus, then of his father. . . .

Suddenly, the emaciated hand was removed, and the face turned slowly round toward Johannes. Only the white beard came into view. The rest remained in the shadow of the hat. Then Johannes recognized him.

"Friend Hein!" said he. And he was much more at his ease than the first time he had seen him — in fact, not at all afraid.

"How do you do?" said Death, nodding. How very kind he looked, and how much more human! Not a bundle of bones with a scythe! He looked instead more like a kind, old — very, *very* old, uncle.

"What are you doing here?" asked Johannes.

"Things!" replied Death, drily.

"Are we going to be shipwrecked?"

Johannes had come to this conclusion without any special alarm. It even seemed to him just now that a shipwreck would be a rather interesting incident.

"No, no!" said Death. "Would you really like that?"

"I would not want it, but neither would I be afraid of it."

"The last time we met, Johannes, you asked me to take you with me."

"I would not ask you that now," said Johannes; "life is too pleasant now."

"Then you are not afraid of me this time, Johannes?"

"No; for now you look so much more friendly."

"And I am friendly, Johannes. The more you try your best to live a fine life, the more friendly I become."

"But what do you mean, friend Hein? I should think the finer life became, the harder it would be to leave it."

"It must be the right sort of fineness, Johannes — the right sort."

"Then it must certainly be that I am seeking the right kind now, or you would not look so much more friendly."

"You are indeed seeking it, Johannes; but look well to it that you also find it. Take care! Take care! I should like when I come again to look most friendly, dear Johannes, and you must be careful to have it so."

"What shall I do, friend Hein? How can I be certain of the right way to live? How can I make you look friendly when you come again?"

But Death turned away his pale face, gave a slight shake of the head, and continued to sit immovable and silent. Once again Johannes asked him a question, but it was of no avail. Then his head grew heavy, his eyelids drooped, and everything vanished under the veil of slumber, while his resting-place quivered and shivered above the heaving waters.

When on deck, the next morning, the world looked again most bright and cheerful. The sun was shining warmly, the

fresh, blue sea was sparkling in the light, and there, in front of him — there lay the foreign land — a long line of grey-white coast, basking in the October sunshine. On the hills Johannes saw little houses standing out in full sight; and he thought of the pettiness of life in those houses — of dressing, of bread and butter, and of little children going to school; — everything so trite and trivial, in what for him was so strange and great.

They coursed up a large river, much broader than the Rhine. The sea-gulls circled over the yellow water, and rested on the sand-banks and the muddy shores. The fishing-boats tacked in zig-zags all about, and throngs of ships and steamboats came to meet them. At last there loomed in the distance, enshrouded with a grey fog, a giant city — a dark maze of masts and chimneys and towers. It was sombre, awful, incomprehensible.

If Johannes had not been so absorbed in thinking of the two children, he would have paid more attention to the city. As it was, he only accepted it for a fact — the unforeseen shadow of a mysterious substance — an ominous premonition, like the rumbling of the ground preceding an earthquake: an instant later all fear is over, and one thinks no further about it.

So it was with Johannes; the great city, the miners — everything was forgotten, when he heard the loved voices of the two little girls.

They lived in a country-seat which to Johannes seemed a small palace. It was built of red brick and grey limestone, and stood on the summit of a hill, close by the shore. In the garden were dark cedar-trees and holm-oaks, and large plots of rhododendrons. The grass was short and even — quite like green velvet; and through it led neat, trim paths of yellow gravel.

The day was far from being so pleasant as Johannes had expected. In fact, it was very unpleasant. To be waited upon

by a lackey, as one comes without a trunk, from a third-class carriage, is far from funny. Johannes had not heretofore had such a trying experience.

Indoors, it was very still and stately. The children were at their lessons, and for the first hour were invisible. Johannes received an unfavorable impression of fashionable life. He wished that he had not come. His hopefulness and confidence suddenly took flight. He tripped over a rug of white bearskin, and ran against a glass door, thinking it was open — just as if he were a bumblebee behind a window-pane. He wondered which was the quickest way out, and wished he were with Markus again, in the small tavern. He was not very far from crying.

On a couch in the quiet reception-room, beside a softly crackling coal fire, sat the countess. Johannes strode up to her, and made an awkward bow. A number of dogs, as many as seven, snapped and yapped about his shin-bones. He thought of his dicky and the green glass studs, and felt that they could be making next to no impression. The countess looked as if she did not quite remember who he was, nor what could have been his object in coming.

"Sit down," she said, in English, with a formal smile, and a weary tone of voice; "I hope you have had a pleasant journey."

Johannes took a seat and, as he did so, observed that some one else was in the room. He tried again to bow, but his attempt was unnoticed.

That other indeed was a most impressive personage. She lay back in an armchair, so enswathed in white lace, swan's down, gauze, and tulle as to look still larger than she really was. Upon her head was a huge hat, bearing natural-sized plums and peaches, artificial blue flowers — forget-me-nots and corn-flowers — besides a blue gauze veil. Her face was amazingly big, and highly colored by nature, but toned down with powder to a rosy flush. It was somewhat pimply, and more or less moustached. Her fat, red, shiny hands were

rigid with jeweled rings; and, although it was not at all warm, she waved incessantly a large fan of white ostrich-feathers, in the midst of which glittered purple and green precious stones. Most wonderful bangles of gold and silver — little pigs, crosses, hearts, and coins — hung in a great bunch upon her bosom, from a long, many-stranded necklace. A slender crutch with a gold handle stood beside her chair, and on the table at hand, a small green parrot was eating grapes. The seven little dogs — all of them white, with pale-blue ribbons around their necks — probably belonged to her. They sat in a threatening circle, as if awaiting the word, and sharply eyed Johannes' ankles.

"What does that boy want?" she asked, in a deep, heavy voice, without even looking at Johannes. And before and answer could come, she called, "Alice!"

Instantly, there appeared from behind a curtain, just as in a comedy, a trim, spruce lady's-maid. She was dressed in black, with cap and cuffs of dazzling whiteness. With quiet little steps and mincing manners, she glided up to the large lady, and offered a smelling-bottle, at which that person began to sniff industriously.

Johannes sat there in extreme embarrassment. He felt that the costly cut-glass smelling-bottle concerned himself. It cried out, in the keen language of its hundreds of cut facets, "You smell of the third class!"

He sat like one rooted to the spot, and all unnerved, looking at the smelling-bottle as if he wished it was a dynamite bomb which would promptly send himself, the fine house, and all his beautiful illusions, flying into space.

Then Countess Dolores came to his rescue.

"Dear Lady Crimmetart," said she, in a coaxing voice, "this is a very interesting youth — really, very interesting. He is a young poet who sings his own compositions. Is it not so, Johannes? They are so charmingly melancholy — really, charmingly so! Indeed, you must hear them, dear friend. I am sure they will please you."

"Really?" said the deep voice; and the blue goggle-eyes in the frightfully big face glared at Johannes.

"Oh, yes, Lady Crimmetart," continued the countess; "but that is not all. Johannes is also a medium — a sensitive — who can see all kinds of elementals — sometimes even in broad daylight. Is it not so, Johannes?"

Johannes was too much distressed and confounded to do more than give a nod of stupefied acquiescence.

"Really?" said Lady Crimmetart, in a voice like that of a ship's commander in heavy weather. "Then he must come to my party next Saturday evening."

"Do you hear, Johannes? That is a great honor," said Countess Dolores. "Lady Crimmetart is one of the cleverest women in the world, and the elect of intellectual England attend her parties."

"Young man," said Lady Crimmetart, "I will let you talk with Ranji-Banji-Singh, of the University of Benares, the great Theosophist, and with Professor von Pennewitz, from Moscow."

One can well fancy what a fine prospect that opened out for poor little Johannes! But Lady Crimmetart did not request; she commanded. It did not seem possible to decline.

Then came another housemaid — just as trim and still and swift as the first one — to offer tea, little slices of bread and butter, and hot cake. Johannes watched nervously, to see how the others partook of them, and then tried to do as they did. But, under the cool, keen regard of the trig maid, of course he upset the milk.

"The bishop is coming, too! The angel!" burst forth Lady Crimmetart.

Johannes had before his mind's eye the mitre and crozier at the evening party. It made him think of Santa Claus. Thereupon the ladies began chatting about church affairs, the altar and the Lord's Supper, elections, and corn-laws, until he could follow them no further. At last Alice was again summoned, the carriage ordered, the smelling-bottle stored

away in a big reticule, the seven small dogs were arranged upon a long, blue-silk cord — like a string of beads; and thus, with the parrot upon the hand of the lady's maid, the procession passed out. At the door, the great lady, who limped a little with gout, turned round once again, while still fanning herself, and thundered: "Come on time, mind! And do not forget your instrument!"

"A woman in a million," said Countess Dolores after she had gone. "Is she not a wonderful woman, Johannes? So good! So clever!"

"Yes!" replied Johannes, meekly, his thoughts occupied anxiously with that instrument he was expected to take to the party.

At last he heard the chattering of high-pitched little voices, and the pattering of light little feet through the quiet house.

His heart began to thump. Then the door opened, and in two seconds the dear, soft little hands put him into a tumultuous state, and the lively, high little voices quite overwhelmed him.

He was consoled; and when they led him away, out-of-doors, and he walked with them, one on each side, over the green cliffs, beside the broad ocean — then he felt something of the new happiness for which he had hoped.

But at night he could not sleep, and when it grew light he still lay in a state of excitement, gazing at the handsome ceiling of dark-brown wood whereon he could see little gilt stars.

He — Little Johannes — was being entertained by a countess, ushered into a sphere of refinement, and living with the dearest little creatures to be found among human beings. He was with his child friends now, but yet he was not happy. He was much too poor and too dull, and would be pitifully mortified here. When he thought of that glittering smelling-bottle, and of the upset milk-pitcher, he buried his face, in shame and bitterness, deep in the pillows.

Toward morning, when he fell asleep for a little while, he

dreamed of a big shop where swimming trousers only were for sale in a hundred varieties of color and material, and bordered with fur, cloth, leather, ermine, and velvet, and decked with bows and monograms. And when Johannes went in to select a pair for the party, an immense man, with a long beard and a high fur cap, stood up behind the counter. It was Professor von Pennewitz, and he gave Johannes an examination; but Johannes knew nothing — absolutely nothing. He failed. Then he was given a stringless violin, and forced to play upon it. The professor was not pleased with the performance; and taking off his fur cap, he completely extinguished Johannes. Suffocated with the heat and closeness, the boy found himself awake, and clammy with distress, having been aroused by a vigorous tap, tap, tap!

V

EVEN before his "ya" (instead of the "yes" he had firmly intended to say, but was surprised out of saying), the door flew open, and the chambermaid came in bearing a big, silver tea-tray. She looked still more trig and trim than the day before, as if all this time she had been standing under a bell-glass. Without the least embarrassment, she went up to Johannes and presented the tea.

Oh, woe! That was a distressing situation! Nothing of the kind had befallen him since the whooping-cough period while his mother was still living, and when she had brought him, abed, tea and toast. Daatje had, indeed, come just once to call him, and it had made him angry because it seemed as if he were still a child. In Daatje's case, too, it was quite different. She looked more like a nurse-maid.

But this utterly strange and stylish little lady, with arranged hair, and a cap with snow-white strings, who surprised him in his nightgown, sound and well, in bed, while his dicky was still hanging by itself over the back of a chair, and the green glass studs were looking in a frightened way at the rest of the shabby clothes lying scattered over the table — *this* housemaid put him out of countenance. Blushing deeply, he declined the tea. As each of his poor garments came under the eye or hand of this pert chambermaid, he could feel her scornful, unuttered thoughts, and he lay dead still while his room was being put in order. He shrank under the sheets up to his nose, and grew wet with perspiration. When the door closed behind her, he took breath again, and regarded, in astonishment, the pitcher of hot water and the snowy towels that she had left him, uncertain exactly what it was he was expected to do with them all.

Really, it was no trifling matter for Johannes — that entrance into a higher and finer station.

Things went rather better during the forenoon, for he stayed with the two children and their German governess. With this kind, every-day sort of person, Johannes felt more at his ease; and he ventured to consult her about his clothes, and what he might, and might not, do in such a grand house.

The countess herself he did not see until afternoon. Then, through the medium of a housemaid, he received an invitation to go to her. She wished to talk with him.

She was again resting on the sofa, and beckoned him to a seat beside her. Johannes thought that she wished to ask him about something. But no! She simply wanted a little conversation — he must know what about. Then, very naturally, Johannes could not think at all; and after a painful quarter of an hour, during which he uttered scarcely anything more than "Yes, Mevrouw!" or "No, Mevrouw!" he was dismissed, still more unhappy than before.

The principal meal, at half-past eight in the evening, was no less distressingly formal, and full of trials. It was as quiet as a funeral, voices were low and whispering, and the servants moved noiselessly to and fro. The governess had told Johannes that he must "dress" for dinner. But alas! poor fellow! What had he to do it with?

As he stood behind his chair, in his shabby jacket and dicky, while the rose-shaded candles lighted up the flowers and the glittering table-furnishings, and the countess came into the great dim dining-room in her rustling, silk attire — then again he felt really wretched. Besides, it was very awkward trying to talk English here, and Dutch seemed not to be in favor. He was conscious during each course of doing something wrong or clumsy; and the lackeys, as they bent over him in offering the dishes, breathed slightly on his neck.

The second night, being tired from lack of sleep, he soon lost consciousness. But during the small hours he had a thrilling and stirring time. Surely I do not need to tell you what rude occurrences there may be in one's dreams. Raging

bulls tore after him as he tried to escape, meeting him again and again at the turning of a lane. There were lonely rooms whose doors flew open of their own accord — a footstep, and a shadow around the corner — of *it!* There were railway tracks with an oncoming train, and, suddenly — paralysis! Then loud bangings at the door, and a call of “Johannes! Johannes!” and, waking up, a deathly stillness. After that he noticed some very queer and most astonishing things in the room — a pair of pantaloons that walked away of itself, and in the corner a blood-curdling phantom. And then he was conscious of not being awake, and of making a desperate effort to shake off sleep. Such was the frightful time which befell Johannes that night.

At last, when he actually woke himself up with a scream that he heard resounding in the stillness, and while he lay listening to the beating of his heart, he also heard, like a soft echo of his cry, a fearful, smothered moaning and lamenting that lingered in the silent hallways of the darkened house. When all was still, he thought it had been a part of his dreams. But even while he was lying wide awake, it began again, and it was such a dismal sound he could feel the goose-flesh forming. Then silence. “It must have been a dog,” he thought. But there it was! A dog does not groan like that! It was a human voice. Could Olga or Frieda be ill?

The next time it came, he knew it was not the voice either of Olga or of Frieda. It was that of a much older person — not an invalid, but some one in mortal anguish — some one being menaced, who was imploring pity. He heard something like “Oh! Oh!—O God, have mercy!” But he could not understand the words, for the sounds came faintly.

He thought a murder was being committed, and he recalled that Death had been his fellow traveler. He sprang out of bed and stepped into the dark hall. Everything was quiet there. The sound came from upstairs, and now he heard, replying to the groans, a calm, soothing, hushing voice — sometimes commanding, sometimes coaxing. A door

opened, and a faint light shone out. Another door was opened and then closed. All this seemed to prove that Johannes' intervention was not at all necessary, and that he would perhaps cut a ridiculous figure by attempting to step in as a rescuer. Then, unnerved and miserable, he went to sleep again.

In the morning, both little girls and the governess partook of their breakfast of tea, malted milk, toasted bread, and ham and eggs, just as if nothing had happened. The mother was to be away again until afternoon. Frieda and Olga sat peacefully and quietly eating, like well bred little girls.

At last Johannes could keep silence no longer, and said to the governess:

"Did anything bad happen in the night?"

"No," said the young German lady, looking at her plate. "There is an invalid in the house."

"Did you hear *Helène*?" asked Olga, looking at Johannes earnestly. "I never hear her now. At first I used to very plainly, but now I sleep through it. Poor *Helène*!"

"Poor *Helène*!" lisped Frieda dutifully after her, resuming her busy spooning of the malted milk.

At noon Johannes was again summoned to the drawing-room. He had had a long walk, alone, beside the sea, and felt more at his ease. He had resolved to ask if he might not go away, since he was out of place here, and felt unhappy. And the party the next evening, at Lady Crimmetart's, where he was expected with an instrument — that was too much for him. He must get away before that.

But ere he had a chance to speak about it, his hostess began thus:

"Were you alarmed in the night, Johannes? Did you hear anything?"

Johannes nodded.

"Well, now that I trust you, fully, I will confide to you my sorrowful secret. Listen."

And the estimable and attractive woman beckoned him, with her loveliest smile, to sit beside the sofa, on a low stool.

It made Johannes feel as if he had been brought, nearly benumbed, into a warm room. Pleasant tinglings coursed down his back, and a fine feeling of contentment and security came over him. The countess rested her soft, delicate hand upon his own, and looked into his eyes, kindly. How beautiful she was! And what a sweet, caressing voice she had! All the distress of those recent days was more than amended.

"I am going to speak to you, my dear Johannes, as if you were much older than you are. You really do seem to me older and wiser than your years would lead one to expect."

Johannes was charmed.

"You must know, then, that my life has been full of suffering. Sorrow has been, so to speak, my constant companion, from earliest youth."

Johannes' heart was aglow with compassion. In well-chosen words, and in the flowing English that Johannes more admired than comprehended, the lady continued:

"My marriage was very unhappy. Constrained by my parents I married a rich man whom I did not love. He is dead now. I will not speak any evil of him."

Johannes that instant made up his mind to a certainty that the man had been a wretch.

"Neither will I trouble you with the story of all our misery. It suffices to say that we did not belong to each other, and each embittered the other's life. After six years of torture — it was nothing else — something happened . . . what usually happens in such cases. . . . Do you understand?"

Johannes, greatly to his vexation, did not understand, and he felt himself to be very stupid.

"I became fond of another. . . . Do you think less of me for that?"

"No! No!" said Johannes' head, as he shook it emphatically.

"Fortunately, my dear boy, I can say that I have nothing to reproach myself with, and can look into the faces of my children without shame. The man for whom I cared was unhappily married — just as I was. We have never seen each other again — not even. . . ."

There was a pause in which the voice of the beautiful speaker broke, while her eyes were veiled in the tears that she was making an effort to repress. Johannes' heart was melting with sympathy.

"Not even," she resumed, "when I was free. My husband made this the opportunity for taking away from me my two children. For years I lived separated from them, even in poverty and privation, with only one old servant who, notwithstanding his low wages, would not desert me.

"During that time, my boy, — you may be surprised to know it, — I longed not only for my children, but even for him who had caused me so much suffering. The mutual parentage of dearly loved children is a wonderful bond that is never completely severed. I would have forgiven him all if he had only called me back."

A silence, in which Johannes' heart, already so inclined to admiration, surrendered itself wholly. The lady continued:

"I was recalled, but alas! too late. They telegraphed me that he was ill, and wished to speak with me. When I arrived, he lay raving, and never recovered his reason. For three days and nights I sat beside him, almost without sleep, to catch anything he might have to say to me. But he raved and raved, incessantly, uttering nothing but nonsense and inarticulate sounds. He certainly knew me; but just the same, he remained hard and cold — sometimes taunting, sometimes angry and abusive. Never shall I forget that night . . ."

With my own two children I found an older girl whom I had never seen. They told me she was a child of a former union. I had never even heard of her. Where the mother was, no one could say. It was thought she was not living.

The girl was then about fifteen years of age, beautiful, with a brilliant color, a fine profile, and flowing black hair."

"More beautiful than Frieda or Olga?" asked Johannes.

The countess smiled.

"Quite another kind of beauty. Much more gloomy and melancholy. When I went to her, she sat crying, and would pay no attention to me. 'Every one dislikes me,' she kept saying. And she repeated this all day long. She did nothing but walk back and forth, crying and lamenting. Only with the greatest trouble could she be induced to rise in the morning, and be dressed, and in the evening, to go to sleep. Her mind was diseased, and little by little it has grown worse. My husband died, and I remained with the three daughters, caring for them as well as I could."

Countess Dolores studied for a while her beautiful, gem-adorned hands, and then went on, with frequent pauses.

"Helène knew very little concerning her mother; but she steadfastly maintained that she was living, and would return, and also . . . that her father and mother had been married. . . ."

Another prolonged silence, the countess regarding Johannes with her lightly half-closed eyes, to see if he understood. Apparently he did not understand; for he sat, in unsuspecting patience, waiting for whatever else was to be said.

"Can you fancy, Johannes, what that would signify to me . . . to my children . . . if it were true?"

Johannes fancied only that he was looking at the speaker in a somewhat confounded and sheepish manner.

"Bigamy, Johannes, is a terrible crime!"

Wait! — A light broke in upon him, albeit a feeble one. His dearly loved children, then, were not legal — were illegitimate — natural, or whatever it was called. Yes, indeed! That was terrible, even though no one, to look at them, would ever think it. But the countess enlightened him still further.

"The idea of living upon the property of another, Johannes, is, to a woman of honor, insufferable!"

What more? The property of another? Then all this sumptuousness, belonged, perhaps, to poor, crazed Helène; and his dear, pretty children and their beautiful mother were only illegal intruders — usurpers of another's possessions!

Johannes faithfully tried his best to feel as the speaker did about all these curious and confusing things. But he did not succeed. Then, in his desire to comfort her, he gallantly uttered in broken English whatever came into his head.

"No, *Mevrouw*; you must not think that. You are beautiful and your children are beautiful, and therefore everything that is beautiful belongs to you. I do not believe you have cause to be ashamed, for I have seen no sign of it. If there were any disgrace, I should have detected it. And how is any one to suppose that such evidence exists either on paper or in some secret closet or other — who knows where? Are you and Frieda and Olga any less beautiful, less lovely, less good? I do not care a bit about it. Absolutely nothing."

The countess laughed so heartily, and pressed his hand so warmly, that Johannes was embarrassed.

"Oh, you lovely boy!" she laughingly cried. "Oh, you queer, funny, darling of a boy! How you cheer me up! I have not been so light-hearted in a long time."

Johannes was very glad, and proud of his success. Countess Dolores dried her tears of laughter upon her lace handkerchief, and resumed:

"But now we must be in earnest. It will be clearer to you now why I am so interested in all that pertains to spiritualism and theosophy — why I listen so eagerly to the wisdom of *Mijnheer van Lieverlee*, and of *Lady Crimmetart* — why I attend the circle of the *Pleiades*, at the Hague — and, too, why it made me so happy to meet you, when I heard that you also were a medium, and could see the *elementals*, in full daylight."

"But why, *Mevrouw*?" asked Johannes, in some distress.

"How can you ask that, my dear boy! Nothing can ever

bring back my peace of mind, except *one* word from him, from the other side of the grave!"

Ah! but that was a hard blow for Johannes. He was not so troubled at having been invited as a guest, for a side purpose—he was not so overweening as that—but because he was surely going to be a disappointment to his beloved countess. With a sigh he looked down at the carpet.

"Shall we not make a call upon the invalid?" asked the lady, rising.

Johannes nodded, and followed her.

The door of the sick-room was barely open, when a pitiable scream rang out from the corner. The poor girl sat on the floor, huddled up in her nightgown, her long black hair disheveled, and hanging down over face and back. Her beautiful dark eyes were widely distended, and her features wore an expression of mortal anguish.

"Oh, God!—It is coming!" she shrieked, trembling. "Now it will happen! Oh, God! It surely will! I know it will! There it comes! Did I not say so? Now it comes!—Oh! Oh! Oh!"

The nurse hushed and commanded, but the poor, tormented creature trembled and wept, and seemed so desperately afraid, that Johannes, greatly moved, begged leave to go away again. It seemed as if she were afraid of him.

"No, my boy!" said the countess. "It is not on account of you. She does that way whoever comes in. She is afraid of everybody and everything she sees or hears.

That whole day, and a good deal of the night, Johannes mused over this one query: "Why—*why* is that poor girl so afraid?"

VI

JOHANNES did not leave, and at last came the day of the dreaded party. Having grown more confident, he had spoken of his needs. The carriage put in an appearance, and in the neighboring town, he was soon provided with suitable clothing.

Still, his mind was not quite at rest.

"Will you also say, dear lady," said Johannes that afternoon, when with the children and their mother, "that I truly cannot play upon any instrument? Please don't ask me to do anything!"

"But, Johannes," urged the countess, "that would really be very disagreeable in me. After what I have said, something will be expected of you."

"I cannot do anything!" said Johannes, in distress.

"He is joking, Mama," said Olga; "he can play the castanets and can imitate animals."

"Oh, yes! all kinds of animals! Awfully nice!" cried Frieda.

"Is that so, Johannes? Well, then?"

It was true that Johannes had amused his two little friends while they were taking walks together — mimicking all sorts of animal sounds, like those of the horse, donkey, cow, dog, cat, pig, sheep, and goat. He had whistled like the birds so cleverly that the two little girls had been enraptured. And one single instrument he did indeed play admirably — the genuine boys' castanets that every schoolboy and street urchin in Holland carries in his pocket certain months of the year. Many an autumn day, sauntering home from school, he had shortened the way for himself with the sharp, clear, uninterrupted "a-rick-a-ty, tick-a-ty *tick!* — a-rick-a-ty, tick-a-ty *tick!* — a-rick-a-ty, tick-a-ty *tick!* — tack! tack!"

The little girls now begged him to let their mama hear. So

he took out his castanets, which he himself had made while there, and clicked away with them lustily.

"Delightful!" cried the countess. "Now you must sing and dance at the same time, like the Spaniards."

Johannes shied at the dancing. But indeed he would sing. And he sang all kinds of street ditties, such as "Oh, Mother, the Sailor!" and "Sara, you're losing your Petticoat," to the merry music of the castanets. The children thought it splendid.

Their enthusiasm excited him, and he began improvising all sorts of nonsense. The little girls clapped their hands, and the longer he played the more merry they grew. Johannes struck an attitude, and announced his selections just as if he were before an audience. The countess and her daughters went and sat in a row — the little girls wild with delight.

"Sketches from Animal Life," announced Johannes, beginning, to the time-keeping accompaniment of the castanets, the well-known air from *The Carnival of Venice*,

"A hen that came from Japan
Assured a crippled toad
She'd never have him for her man.
That was a sorry load."

The little girls shouted and stamped, with glee.

"More, Jo! — More, more, Johannes! Do!"

"Splendid!" cried the countess, speaking in Dutch, now, herself.

"A rhinoceros said to a louse,
'I'll stamp you flat on the ground!'
The louse made tracks for his house,
And there he is now to be found.

"A grasshopper sat in the grass,
And said to a chimpanzee:
'Your coat I will thank you to pass,
That I may attend a partie.'

"A snoop who stood on the stoop
Asked of his fellow boarder
If hairs he found in the soup.
The *hostess*? — 'Twas malice toward her!

"A crab who enjoyed a joke,
Gave his mama a kick.
And when she dropped at his poke,
He laughed till the tears fell thick."

"Hey, there!" the little girls shouted boisterously. "Jolly!
More, more! Jol!"

"A stock-fish, deaf-and-dumb born,
Once said to a billy-goat:
'Of my head I see I am shorn —
'Twas you did it, silly goat!'"

"There, there, Johannes! That will do. Now you are getting foolish," said the mother.

"Oh, no, Mamal! Only funny!" cried Frieda and Olga.
"He *is* so funny! Go on, Jol!"

But Johannes was quite disconcerted by the mother's comment, and there was no further exposition of "Sketches from Animal Life."

In the evening Johannes drove with the countess in the state-coach to Lady Crimmetart's. Milady dwelt in a very handsome house — a castle in a large park. From a distance, Johannes could see the brightly lighted windows, and also the vehicles in front of the pillars, at the entrance.

Overhead, an awning was spread, and a long strip of heavy, bright-red carpeting laid down, so that the guests might be protected in passing from their carriages to the magnificent vestibule. The way was lined with lackeys — full twenty on each side. They looked very impressive, all of them tall and heavy, wearing knee-breeches of yellow plush, and red lace-

trimmed coats. Johannes was puzzled because they all seemed to be such old men. Their hair was white as snow. That was powder, however, and it added to their dignity. How small and shabby Johannes felt while running the gauntlet of those liveried lackeys!

Indoors, Johannes was completely blinded by the dazzling light. He ascended a vaulted staircase, the broad steps of which were of many-colored marble. He saw vaguely, flowers, electric lamps, variegated carpets, broad, conspicuously white expanses of shirt-linen bordered with black coat, and bare necks adorned with gems and white lace. He heard a subdued murmur of soft voices, the rustling of silk clothing, the announcement of names.

In the background, at the top of the stairs, the swollen visage of Lady Crimmetart was glowing like a railway danger-signal. All the guests went up to her, and their names being spoken, each one received a bow and a handshake.

"What name, sir?" asked a colossal lackey, as he bent obliquely over Johannes. Johannes stammered out something, but the countess repeated it, changed.

"Professor Johannes, of Holland!" he heard called out. He bowed, received a handshake, and saw the powdered face smiling — or grinning — with affected sweetness. Lady Crimmetart's neck and arms were so fat and bare that Johannes was nearly terrified by them, and did not dare look straight. They were loaded with precious stones — big, flat, square, uniformly cut diamonds, alternating with pear-shaped pearls. Three white ostrich feathers bobbed in her head-dress. There were no animals at her side, but of course she had her fan and her gold-headed crutch.

"How do you do?" inquired the deep voice. But before Johannes could reply that he was pretty well, she addressed herself, with a grinning smile, to the next comer. Beside her stood a short, heavily built man. He had a shiny, bald head, a red face with deeply cut lines, and a large, bony nose. It was precisely such a head as one sees carved upon knobs of

walking-sticks and parasols. It was Lord Crimmetart who stood there, and he gave Johannes' hand a firm clasp.

For an hour or so Johannes wandered about in the midst of the crowd. He felt dispirited and lonesome to begin with; and the babel of voices, the sheen and rustle of silken garments, the glitter of lights and of precious stones, the uniforms, bare necks, and white shirt-fronts, and the heavy scent of perfumery and of flowers, — all this oppressed him until he became deeply dejected. There was such a press of people that at times he could not stir, and the ladies and gentlemen talked straight into his face. How he longed for a quiet corner and an every-day companion! Everybody except himself had something to say. There was no one among those passing by so forlorn as he. He did not understand what they all could be saying to one another. The scraps of conversation that did reach him were about the stir in the room and the magnificence of the party. But the saying of that was not the reason for their having come together.

Johannes felt that the feast of the elves in the dunes had been far more pleasant.

Then, strains of music reached him from a stringed orchestra hidden behind green laurel. That awakened longings almost painful, and he drew closer, to sit down, unobserved, and let the people stream by. There he sat, with moistened eyes, looking dreamily out before him, while his thoughts dwelt upon quiet dunes and sounding seas on a moonlit night.

"Professor Johannes, let me introduce you to Professor von Pennewitz," rang suddenly in his ears. He rose to his feet startled. There stood Lady Crimmetart beside a diminutive man, whose scanty grey locks hung down to his coat-collar. The vision was little like Johannes' dream.

"This is a youthful prodigy, Professor von Pennewitz — a young poet who recites his own compositions. At the same time he is a famous medium. You certainly will have interesting things to say to each other."

Thereupon, Lady Crimmetart disappeared again among the other guests, leaving the two bowing to each other — Johannes abashed and perplexed, von Pennewitz bowing and rubbing his hands together, teetering up and down on his toes, and smiling.

"Now for the examination!" thought Johannes, waiting in mute patience — a victim to whatever wise questions the great man was to pillory him with.

"Have you — ah — known the family here for long?" asked von Pennewitz — opening and closing his thin lips with a sipping sound, while with fingers affectedly spread, he adjusted his eyeglasses, peering over the tops of them at Johannes.

"No, I do not know them at all!" replied Johannes, shaking his head.

"No?" said von Pennewitz, rubbing and wringing his hands, most cheerfully. And then he continued, in broken English:

"Well, well! That pleases me. Neither do I. Curious people! Do you not think so, young man?"

Johannes, somewhat encouraged by this affability, gave a hesitating assent.

"Have you such types in Holland, also? Surely upon a more modest scale? Ha! ha! ha! — These people are astonishingly rich! Have you tried their champagne? — No? Then you must just come with me to the buffet. It is worth the trouble, I can assure you."

Happy, now, to be at least walking with some one, Johannes followed the little man, who piloted him through the packed mass of people.

Arrived at the buffet they drank of the sparkling wine.

"But, sir," said Johannes, "I have heard that Lady Crimmetart is so very clever."

"Have you, indeed?" said the Professor, looking again at Johannes over the top of his glasses, and nodding his head. "I have nothing to say about that. Much traveled — papa

a boarding-house keeper — a smattering of almost everything. Nowadays one can get a good deal out of the newspapers. Do you read the papers, young man?"

"Not much, sir," said Johannes.

"Good! Be cautious about it. Let me give you some extra-good advice. Read few newspapers, and eat few oysters. Especially in Rome eat no oysters. I have just come from a fatal case of poisoning — a Roman student."

Johannes mentally resolved, on the spot, to eat anything in Rome rather than oysters.

"Is Lord Crimmetart also so clever, Professor?" asked Johannes.

"He is bright enough. In order to become a Lord and an arch-millionaire by means of patent pills alone, one needs to be a bright rascal. Just try it! Ha! ha! ha!"

The professor laughed heartily, snorted and sniffed, clicked his false teeth, and finished off his glass. Then he said:

"But take care, young man, that you do not marry before you have made your pile. That was a stupid move of his. He would be able to do very much better now. If he chose, he might win Countess Dolores."

The blood rushed to Johannes' head, and he flushed deeply.

"I am staying there, sir!" said he, considerably touched.

"Is that so? Is that so?" replied the professor, in a propitiatory tone. "But I said nothing about her, you know. A most charming woman. A perfect beauty. So she is your hostess? Well, well, well!"

"There is His Grace, the bishop!" cried the heavy voice of Lady Crimmetart, as she passed by, hurrying toward the entrance.

Johannes was on the *qui vive* for the white mitre and the gilded crozier, but he could see only a tall, ordinary gentleman in a black suit, and wearing gaiters. He had a smooth, good-looking face, that bore an affected smile; and in his hand he held a curious, flat hat, the brim of which was held

up with cords, as if otherwise it might droop down over his nose. Lady Crimmetart received him quite as warmly as Aunt Seréna received the dominie. How Johannes wished he was still at his Aunt Seréna's!

"Sir!" said some one at his ear, "Milady wishes to know if you have brought your instrument, and if you will not begin now."

Johannes looked round, in a fright. He saw a portly personage with an upstroked moustache, in black satin short-clothes, and a red coat — evidently a master of ceremonies.

"I have no instrument," stammered Johannes. But he did have his castanets in his pocket. "I cannot do anything," he repeated — most miserable.

The pompous one glanced right and left, as if he had made some mistake. Then he stepped away a moment, to return soon, accompanied by Countess Dolores.

"What is it, my dear Johannes?" said the countess. "You must not disappoint us."

"But, Mevrouw, I really cannot."

The pompous one stood by, looking on in a cool, impassive way, as if quite accustomed to the sight of freaks who were considered youthful prodigies. Johannes' forehead was wet with perspiration.

"Indeed you can, Johannes! You are sure to do well."

"What shall I announce?" asked the pompous one. Johannes did not understand the question, but the countess replied, in his stead.

In a twinkling he was standing beside a piano encircled by guests, and he saw hundreds of eyes, with and without eyeglasses, fastened upon him. Straight in front — next Lady Crimmetart — sat the bishop, looking at him severely and critically, out of hard, cold, light-blue eyes.

The master of ceremonies called out, loudly and clearly:

"National Hymns of Holland." And then poor Little Johannes had to clap and sing — whatever he could. To

keep up courage, he threw just a glance at the beautiful face of the countess, with its near-sighted eyes — and tried to think it was for her alone that he sang. He did his best, and sang in *tremolo* from "Oh, Mother, the Mariner!" and "We are going to America," to "The Hen from Japan," and "The Tiger of Timbuctoo" — his entire repertory.

They listened, and looked at him as if they thought him a queer specimen; but no one laughed. Neither the goggle-eyes of the hostess, nor the stern regard of the bishop, nor one of the hundreds of other pairs of eyes pertaining to these richly dressed and excellent ladies and gentlemen, evinced the slightest token of emotion, happy or otherwise. That was scarcely to be wondered at, since they did not understand the words; but it was not encouraging. Without loss of time, most of them turned away their attention, and began anew their laughing and chattering.

When he stopped, there sounded, to his astonishment, a lone hand-clapping, and Countess Dolores came up to him, gave her hand, and congratulated him upon his success. Lady Crimmetart, also, thundered out that it was "awfully interesting." A tall, thin young lady, in white satin, whose prominent collar bones were but slightly concealed by a ten-fold necklace of pearls, came, smiling sweetly, to press his hand. She was so happy, she said, to have heard the *Carnival of Venice* in the original, by a veritable resident of the city. "How peculiarly interesting! But it must be so nice, Professor . . . ah! I have lost your name! . . . so nice to live in a city lying wholly under water, and where everybody wears wooden shoes!"

"Was that entirely your own composition, Professor Johannes?" inquired a plain, good-natured little lady, in a simple black gown. And several other women, of riper years, sought to introduce themselves. He really brightened up a little at these tokens of approval, although he rather mistrusted their sincerity. When, however, he found himself beside a group of tall, broad-shouldered Britishers, with high

collars, florid, smooth-shaven cheeks, and trim, closely-cropped, wavy, blonde hair, who, one hand in the trousers' pocket, stood drinking champagne, he heard such expressions as "beastly," "rot," and "humbug," and he very well knew that the words were applied to himself.

Shortly after this it became clear to him what constitutes genuine success. A robust young lady, with very artfully arranged hair, and pretty white teeth, sang, accompanied by the piano, a German song. With her head swaying from side to side and occasionally tossed backward, and with her mouth open very wide, she threw out trills and runs, like a veritable music-box. The sound of it all pierced through to Johannes' very marrow. What her song was intended to say, it was hard to tell, for she spoke a remarkable kind of German. Apparently, she was exciting herself over a faithless lover, or mistress, and dying — out of sheer affection.

When she had ended, and made a sweet, smiling bow, a vigorous round of applause followed, with cries of "bis," and "encore." Johannes had not himself received such acclaim, nor would he now take part therein.

In his dejection, he went to find Countess Dolores. She was the only one there to whom he could turn for comfort. He asked if he might not take his leave, since he was tired, and did not feel at home where he was.

The countess herself appeared not to be very well satisfied; she had won no honors through him, nevertheless she said:

"Come, my boy, do not be discouraged! You have still other gifts. Have you spoken with Ranji-Banji-Singh?"

A little earlier, Johannes had seen the tall East-Indian, with head erect, and a courtly carriage, striding through the motley crowd. He had wide nostrils, large, handsome eyes with somewhat drooping lids, a light-brown complexion, splendid blue-black hair, and a sparse beard. He wore his white turban, and yellow silk clothing, with solemn ceremoniousness. When any one spoke to him, he smiled most

condescendingly, and, closing his eyes, he laid his slender hand, with its pale nails and upturned finger-tips, upon his bosom, and made a profound and graceful bow.

Johannes had noticed him especially, as one to whom he felt more attracted than to any other; and he had visions of deep, blue skies, majestic elephants, rustling palms, and palace façades of pale marble, on the banks of the Sacred River. However, he had not dared to address him.

But now the countess and Johannes went to find him, and find him they did, beside Lady Crimmetart, in a circle of ladies to whom he appeared to be speaking in rotation, with a courtly smile.

"Mr. Ranji-Banji-Singh," said Countess Dolores, "have you made the acquaintance of Professor Johannes, of Holland? He is a great medium, and you certainly will find him sympathetic."

The East-Indian showed his white teeth again, in a winning smile, and gave his hand to Johannes. The boy felt, however, that it was not given from the heart.

"But are you not also a medium, Mr. Singh?" asked one of the ladies, "such a great theosophist as you!"

Ranji-Banji-Singh threw back his head, made with his clasped hands a gesture as if warding off something, and smiling disdainfully, said, in broken English:

"Theosophists not mediums. Mediums is organ-grinders — theosophist, composer. Medium-tricks stand low; — street-jugglery for gold. Theosophist and Yogi can everything, all the same — can much more, but not show. That is meanness, unworthiness!"

The slender brown hand was shaken in Johannes' face, in an endeavor to express its owner's contempt, while the dark face of the East-Indian took on an expression of one compelled to drink something bitter.

That was too much for Johannes. Feeling himself misunderstood by the only one upon whom he cared to make a good impression, he said, angrily:

"I never perform tricks, sir. I exhibit nothing. I am not a medium."

"Not by profession — not a professional medium," said Countess Dolores, to save the situation.

"Then you do not practise table-tilting, nor slate-writing, nor flower-showering?" asked the East-Indian, while his face cleared.

"No, sir! Nothing whatever!" said Johannes, emphatically.

"If I had known that!" exclaimed Lady Crimmetart, while her eyes seemed almost rolling out of her head. "But, Mr. Singh, can you not, just for this one time, show us something? Let us see something wonderful? A spinning tambourine, or a violin that plays of itself? Do, now! When we ask you so pleadingly, and when I look at you so fondly! Come!"

And she cast sheep's eyes at Mr. Ranji-Banji-Singh in a manner which did not in the least arouse Johannes' envy.

The theosophist bowed again, smiling with closed eyes, but at the same time contracting his brows as if struggling with his aversion.

Then they went to a boudoir having glass walls and exotic plants — a kind of small conservatory, in a soft twilight. There they seated themselves at a table, with the East-Indian in the circle. Johannes was promptly excluded with the words: "Antipathetic! Bad influence!"

"That's Keesje, yet — surely!" thought Johannes.

Then there was writing upon slates held by Mr. Singh in one hand, under the table. The scratching of the pencil could be heard, and soon the slate reappeared — covered with writing in various languages — English, Latin, and Sanscrit. These sentences were translated by the East-Indian, and appeared to contain very wise and elevating lessons.

But Johannes had the misfortune to notice that the slate which should have been written upon was quickly exchanged

by the theosophist the instant that he succeeded in diverting the attention of all the on-lookers. And Johannes added to his inauspicious observation the imprudent exclamation — loud and triumphant — “I see it all! He is exchanging slates!”

A regular riot ensued. Yet Ranji-Banji-Singh, with the utmost calmness, brought the exchanged slate to light again, and, with a triumphant smile, showed that it was without writing. Johannes looked baffled, yet he knew to a certainty that he had seen the deception, and he cried: “I saw it, nevertheless!”

“For shame!” thundered Lady Crimmetart. And all the other ladies cried indignantly, “Disgracefull!”

Ranji-Banji-Singh, with a taunting smile said: “I have compassion. Yogi know not hate, but pity evil-doer. Bad Karma. Unhappy person, this!”

That did not agree with what Herr van Lieverlee had said. He had commended Johannes’ Karma. But Countess Dolores, now realizing that she was to have no further satisfaction out of her protégé, at once withdrew, and quite good-naturedly, so that he might not feel at all reproached. Indeed, she comforted him, with her friendly jests.

Johannes saw some daily papers lying in the hall of Countess Dolores’ house. Against the advice of Professor von Pennewitz, he began running them through. His eyes remained glued to the page, for he saw there a communication from Germany, to the effect that the miners’ strike had ended. The laborers had lost the battle.

The sleepless night that ensued seemed very long to him. Poor Heléne, also, was restless, and wailed and wailed without pause.

VII

BE brave now, for my story is going to be truly sombre and shuddery. Truth can sometimes appear very black; but if we only dare to look her straight in the eye, she smiles, in the end, brightly and blithely.

Only those who are afraid of her, and turn halfway back, will be caught and held fast in the meshes of gloom and misery.

You have, doubtless, known all along that there was something utterly amiss in Johannes' fine, new life — that he had made a pitiful mistake, and was all at sea. He, also, knew it now, although he would not admit it to himself. Those joyful expectations had not been prompted by the Father's voice, and he knew now that one could be misled by positive impressions.

However, he was not yet out of the scrape. To acknowledge again that he had made a mistake — to leave this life and return to Markus and Marjon, was a hard thing to do. Here were far greater attractions than Aunt Seréna's raspberries and fresh rolls. When he thought of the garden at Vrede-best, ah, how eagerly he longed to be there again! But that which held him here had a much stronger hold upon him, for he would not admit to himself that it would be better to leave it. That he should be an intimate little friend of this beautiful, distinguished woman — *that*, above all things — preoccupied him day and night.

Did you ever, late at night, when you ought to have been in bed, read a very captivating book? You knew then, did you not, that it was not good for you — that you would be sorry for it? Perhaps you even found the book to be dull or base. And yet you could not break off, but read on and on, just one more chapter, to see how it ended.

That was the way with Johannes, in the pretty villa of Countess Dolores.

He stayed on, week after week, month after month, writing nothing to Holland, nor to Aunt Seréna — nothing to his Brother, nor to Marjon, either because of he knew not what, or because he was ashamed.

One thought alone prevailed over all others; what would she say when he should have another talk with Countess Dolores, and what should he reply? Would she stroke his hair, or even press a kiss upon it, as once she had done — the same as with her two little daughters?

Perhaps you have never yet been in love. If you never have, you cannot know what all this means. But it is not a slight matter, and there is nothing in it to rail about.

Johannes himself did not quite know what had happened. He only felt that never yet in his life had anything so perplexing and distressing come to him.

It was so wonderful, too. It gave him pain — sharp pain — and yet it was sweet to him, and he welcomed it. It caused him anguish and anxiety, and yet he would not run away from it. It was so contradictory — so confounding!

One sultry, stormy evening he took a lonely walk over the cliffs, and followed a narrow path lying close to the grey steepes at the foot of which the breakers were pounding.

He saw the sun go down behind great masses of clouds, just as he had formerly done. But now how different it was! How cold and strange it seemed! He felt left out. Life — cruel, human life — with its passions and entanglements, now had him in its grasp.

It seemed agonizing and frightful, as if a great monster had pursued him to the shore of the sea, and were still close behind. And now Nature had become strange and inhospitable.

He stretched out his hand, and cried to the clouds:

“Oh, help me, clouds with the silver lining!” But the clouds rolled on as if wholly unconscious of the wonderful shapes they assumed at every turn — ever changing, and

adorned anew with glittering gold and gleaming silver. And all the while the sea was roaring just as if it had no memory whatever of Johannes.

And when he had cried "Help me, clouds with the silver lining!" the words clung to his mind, and, like shining angels, they beckoned other, sister words, still lingering in the depths of his soul, to come and join them. And so they came — one after another, in twinkling file, and fell into line. Their faces seemed more serious than did ever those of his own words.

"Help, oh, help me, ye silver-lined clouds!

Oh, save me, sun and stormy sea!

To thee I fly from stifling haunts of men.

Life, with its frightful, crimson-flaming hands,
Has laid its hold on me.

Once I was thy friend and confidant —

At home in thy mysterious loneliness.

I explored without fear thy boundless space

And celestial mansions builded I there

With the mere light of stars, and the waves of wind.

Peace I found in thy grandeur stern,

And rest in thy bright expanse.

Now, life sweeps me on with its current swift,

And a seething volcano I find where erst

Was an ocean serene of exalted delights.

Alas! thou doest rest in thy splendor immersed —

As cool as a lion licking his paws.

All slowly the cloud is transformed,

Letting the light stream through,

And the tossing main with sparks is clad,

As if with a golden coat of mail.

Ah, beautiful world! Untrue and unreal

Thou glidest away 'neath my anguished eyes.

The ocean roars ever, and silent are sun and clouds.

Sadly, I see the strange daylight fail.

It leaves me alone with still stranger night.

Oh! may I yet find there my Father's spirit,
That dwells beyond sun and sea and clouds?
Must I join with the hapless, hopeless throng
And bind my sorrowful fate to theirs,
Until the Great Leveler bring surcease?"

What Johannes meant by the "Great Leveler" he did not himself know at first. Neither did he at all realize that he had composed something better than formerly. But in the night he understood that it was Death he had meant. And he knew, also, that something within him had opened to the light, like an unfolding flower.

He felt that the verses might be sung like a song, but he could not hear the melody—or but faintly—like wind-wafted tones from the farthest distance. At night, he heard in his dreams the full strain, but in the morning he had entirely forgotten it. And Marjon was not there to help him.

You must remember that Little Johannes was no longer so *very* little. Nearly four years had passed since that morning when he had waked up in the dunes, with the little gold key.

He could not refrain from reading the poem to the countess on the following day. The making of it—the writing and rewriting—had calmed the unrest out of which it had come. He was curious, now, to learn what others would say of it—above all, the one who was ever in his thoughts.

"Ah, yes!" said she, after he had read it aloud, "life is fearful! And that 'surcease' is all that I long for. I fully agree with you."

This remark, however kind the intention of the speaker, gave Johannes, to his own astonishment, small pleasure. He would have preferred to hear something different.

"Do you think it good?" he asked, with a vague feeling that he really ought not to ask the question, because he had been so very much in earnest over the verses. And when one is deeply in earnest about anything one does not ask if it is good ;

no more than he would ask if he had wept beautifully. But yet he would have liked, so well, to know what she thought.

"I do not know, Johannes. You must not hope for a criticism from me. I think the idea very sympathetic, and the form seems to me also quite poetic. But whether or not it is good poetry, you must ask of Mijnheer van Lieverlee. He is a poet."

"Is Mijnheer van Lieverlee coming soon?"

"Yes; I expect him shortly."

One fine day Van Lieverlee put in an appearance. With him arrived a host of merrily creaking, yellow trunks, smelling delightfully like russia leather — ditto high-hat box, and a brisk, smooth-shaven, traveling-servant.

Van Lieverlee wore in his button-hole a dark-red rose, and pointed pale-green carnation leaves.

He was very much at his ease — contented and gay — and when he saw Johannes he did not appear to have a very clear remembrance of him.

That evening Johannes read to him the poem. Van Lieverlee listened, with an absent-minded expression of face, while he drummed on the arm of the low, easy-chair in which he lay indolently outstretched. It looked very much as if the verses bored him.

When it was over, and Johannes was waiting in painful suspense, he shook his head emphatically.

"All rhetoric, my worthy friend — mere bombast! 'Oh! Alas!' and 'Ah!' All those are impotent cryings which show that the business is beyond you. If you had full control of expression, you would not utter such cries — you would form, shape, knead, create, model — *model!* Plasticity, Johannes! That is the thing — vision, color, imagery! I see nothing in that poem. I want something to see and taste. Just think of that sonnet of mine! Every line full of form, of imagery, of real, actual things! With you, there is nothing but vague terms — weak swaggering — all about the spirit of your Father, and such things — none of them to be seen. And, to

produce effect, you call upon the other words: 'Ah!' and 'Alas!' and 'Oh!' as if that helped, at all. Any cad could do that if he fell into the water. That is not poetry."

Johannes was completely routed. And although his hostess tried to console him with assurances that if he did his best things would go better with him by and by, when he was a little older, it was of no avail. Johannes already knew that it was quite in vain for him to attempt his best, so long as the inspiration he so much needed was withheld.

His night was a sad one; for the serious words of the poem were continually before him, and to think that they had been disdained was indeed torture. They would not be driven away, but remained to vindicate their worth. And then he wished that others, as well as he, should value them. But his powerlessness and his own mistrust, were a grievous vexation.

In the small hours, he had just fallen asleep — probably for only a few minutes — when he awoke again with the feeling that his room was full, but with what kind of company — human beings or other creatures — he could not tell. He did not see them; for just in the place where he was looking there was no one, and where he wanted to look, he could not. He seemed to be prevented from doing so by a strange power.

He heard a laugh, and the sound was very familiar to him. It was a dismal, old-time memory. It was Pluizer's laugh.

Could Pluizer be in the room?

Johannes tried his best to look at the spot whence the sound came. Exerting himself, he saw something at last — not an entire figure, but hands only — two, four, six little hands, busily doing something. Higher up, to what was above the hands, he could not look — but that they were the hands of Pluizer he was quite positive.

There was something in those hands — a white band — and the little hands were very busy tying all kinds of knots in it. And all the while there was continuous laughing and snickering, as if it was great fun.

What could that mean? Johannes felt that something menaced. The play of those little hands portended danger. Most plainly of all he saw the white band — a common, white tape.

Then the hands went out of the room, and Johannes was forced to follow them. In another room — that of Heléne's nurse — there they were, as busy as ever, this time with a pair of scissors. The scissors had fallen upon the floor close to a toilet-table. One point having stuck through the carpet into the floor, there they stood — erect. The invisible one was laughing again — giggling and snickering — and all six little hands were pointing at the scissors.

A light was burning in Heléne's room, but the poor, sick girl was not now complaining. All was quiet there. The door opened, and the nurse came out, leaving it open behind her. The nurse went to her own room to look for something. She was a long time searching, but could not find it. Surely it was the scissors.

All this time they were sticking by one point, in the carpet behind the toilet-table, and the six little hands were pointing at them. But the seeker apparently neither saw the hands nor heard the laughter.

Johannes could not help her. He had to follow the hands. He still heard giggling and snickering, and saw the little hands go away — downstairs, through the hall, outside.

Save for the shining of the stars — sharp and clear in the black sky — it was still very dark out-of-doors.

On the terrace, there was visible to Johannes, a tall, dark figure. He could look at it better than at the sneering ones. He recognized it, instantly. It was He with whom he had traveled by sea.

The dark figure now took the lead with slow, firm strides. Pluizer went next, but in between these two there was a third.

It was quite impossible for Johannes to look at that third one. When he tried to look, he felt an indescribable agony.

That third one! Yes, he certainly knew it well. It was *it*!

Do you understand? The *It* which lies in wait around the corner, outside the door, while you dream of being alone in a dark room, vainly trying to call for help.

It, the most frightful object! — so frightful that no one can either look at or describe it.

These three now passed down the dark avenue of the park until they came to the black pool lying deathly still and calmly expectant — shining beneath the starlight.

There the three sat down and waited.

It was still as still could be. Not a leaf rustled.

The star-tips on the water were as sharply defined as points of light upon fathomless darkness.

"Prettily planned; don't you think so?" said Pluizer.

It grumbled, sneeringly.

Thereupon good Death, in a soft, restful voice, said:

"Yet all is for the best!"

Then again they sat very still. Johannes waited with them for he could not do otherwise.

The sound of a door was heard in the still night air, and a white figure drew near, with light, swift steps. By the faint starlight Johannes saw the slender girl in a white nightdress, her black hair flowing loose.

For an instant she stood still at the edge of the pool. Johannes could see her eyes shining with both terror and joy, like those of one pursued who sees escape. He tried to call or to move, but could do neither.

Then the girl waded into the water with her arms extended as if to embrace it. She went cautiously, so that the water neither plashed nor spattered; only, the star-points were broken up and became long stripes, and serpentine lines of light. These, after the white garment could be seen no more, still continued — dancing up and down with the ripples.

"We have her!" sneered Pluizer.

"That remains to be seen," said good Death.

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At once, Johannes found himself awake, in his own bed.

He had been wakened by noises, cries of anguished voices, hasty runnings hither and thither through the hallways of the house, and by the opening and shutting of doors.

"Heléne! Heléne!" rang through the halls, in the garden, in the park. "Heléne! Heléne!"

Johannes dressed himself, not overhastily, for he knew it was too late.

The members of the household were already gathered in the large vestibule. The poor nurse, with a startled face of deathly pallor, came in from the garden.

"I cannot find her anywhere," she cried. "It is my fault — my fault!"

She sat down and began to sob.

"Come, dear," said the countess, in her tranquil voice, "do not reproach yourself. She may be back again in no time; or perhaps the servants will find her in the town."

"No, no," shrieked the poor nurse. "She has long wanted to do it, and I knew it. I never left her door unfastened. But this time I only thought to be gone two seconds. She had knotted a tape into a tangle, and I wanted to get my scissors. But I could not find them . . . and then . . . O God! How could I be so stupid! I can never forgive myself. Oh, my God, my God!"

Could not Johannes have run quickly to the pool, and told what he knew? No, for he also knew, quite as surely, that it was too late. And before he could have done it, the men came to say she had been found. He saw her borne into the house, wrapped in a checked bed-cover.

And when he saw them making vain endeavors to resuscitate her he remarked that he feared it would do no good. And he added, "Indeed, I don't fear — but I hope so."

"For her sake," said the countess.

"Surely for her sake," repeated Johannes, in some surprise.

Van Lieverlee had not appeared. But when the corpse of the beautiful girl had been placed upon her death-bed, her

slender hands crossed upon her breast, her hair — still moist — laid in heavy braids about the delicate, sallow little face, the dark lashes nearly closed over the sightless eyes, white lilies and snowdrops all around, then Van Lieverlee came to see.

"Look," said he to Johannes, "this is very pretty. I would not have cared to see her taken from the water. A drowned person is nearly always an ugly spectacle. Even the most beautiful girl becomes repulsive and clownlike when being dragged out of the water by leg or arm, with face and hair all duck-weed and mud. But *this* is worth while. Mind, Johannes, genuine artists are always lucky. They come across the beautiful, everywhere. Such an event as this is, for a poet, a rare bit of good luck."

The next day he was deep in the making of poetry. But Johannes was in a restless, introverted mood, and could find no words for what distressed him.

VIII

A FEW days later, the two guests were sitting with their hostess at the afternoon-tea table.

"Is it not a frightful thought," said Countess Dolores, "that the poor girl cannot yet have rest, but must do penance for her sinful deed?"

"I cannot believe it," said Johannes.

"But yet it was a sin."

"I would certainly forgive her."

"By which we perceive, Dolores," broke in Van Lieverlee, "that Johannes is much more kind-hearted than his beloved Lord."

"But why, Johannes, can you not assure us about that of which I have so often asked?" said the countess again.

"Can you not put yourself into communication with her?"

"No, *Mevrouw*," replied Johannes.

"But your Mahatma, Johannes!" said Van Lieverlee. "He can do it all right. It is child's play for him."

"Of whom are you speaking?" asked the hostess, looking with quickened interest at Van Lieverlee.

"Of his Mahatma. Has he never told you about his Mahatma?"

"Not a word," said the countess, a little pettishly, while Johannes maintained a mortified silence.

"Well, Johannes knows a sage — a Yogi — a great Magician. He saw him come ashore from over the North Sea — which phenomenon might be termed levitation — and this Magician traveled with him in disguise."

"But, Johannes, why have you never told me that? It was not kind of you. You knew how much I have longed for the advice of such a person."

Johannes knew very little to tell. That question exactly

concerned what was most perplexing and distressing to him in this situation.

Something there was that always restrained him from speaking of Markus — yes, even the thought of him was baffling. And yet how much he longed for him! But he felt that that longing was opposed to the other longings which held him where he was.

"I believe," he said at last, timidly, "that he does not like it when I talk about him."

"Of course," said Van Lieverlee, "but only in the case of the uninitiated — the common herd."

"Do you count me in with them?" asked his hostess in her most engaging manner.

"No, no!" protested Johannes, with great earnestness. "But neither do I know where he is."

"He well knows, however, where *we* are," said Van Lieverlee, "and if we desire to see him, he will come to us."

"He surely will not come here," said Johannes.

"Why not?"

Johannes could not explain why, but the countess said:

"Then we will go to Holland and have him come to our club."

That gave Johannes a thrill of joy. But ah! he realized at the same time how cold and unresponsive he had become to the *beautiful* which had brought him thither. The two children were indeed just as captivating, but they did not give him the same happiness as before. And he began gradually to dislike Van Lieverlee.

In Holland, Countess Dolores dwelt in a villa between a large town and the ocean. And when Johannes was there again, and, though knowing better, was expecting to re-see his beloved dunes, then, for the first time, he felt convinced that Pan was indeed dead, and Windekind's kingdom at an end.

Civilization had conquered the dunes. Long, straight,

barren streets led out to them, and house after house, all exactly alike — as tedious as they were ugly — lined the comfortless way. Sand drifted through the dreary, brick-paved streets, and shavings, bits of tin, and great pieces of tattered wall-paper were strewn about the intervening spaces. Buildings were being put up everywhere. Of the beauty and mystery of the dunes there was nothing left — only dismal, dust-littered heaps of sand.

The ocean also was spoiled for Johannes, for here there were great crowds of people, come for the sake of society, or else for the music. And even when they were gone there still remained the ugly buildings they had erected.

Countess Dolores seemed indeed to share Johannes' aversion and disappointment. Not so Van Lieverlee. Here he was in his element — dressing himself most gorgeously, making visits, and attending the principal clubs, restaurants, and concerts.

"Romance is dead, my friend," said he. "You must have *life* — Life with a capital letter, Life is Passion. Art is Passion. Life is Art — rude, real life — one day gloriously luxurious, the next day coarse and loathsome. You must not dream of the past, Johannes, but live in the present. And you must experience everything, take a part in and enjoy everything, and despise everything. You must lead life by the nose — seize it by the throat and force it to do your bidding. Get tipsy with life — spew it out of your mouth — strike it flat to earth — sling it at the clouds — play upon it as upon a violin — stick it in your buttonhole, like a gardenia — roll with it in the gutter, and consort with it in orgies of supremest passion. Study it in its hideous nakedness and vileness, and subjugate it to your dearest dreams of blood and gold."

This oration was delivered in the evening after Van Lieverlee had dined with his friends. Later, Johannes observed that Van Lieverlee liked best to study the hideous phases of life from a safe distance, and to choose for himself the easy and pleasant ones.

Visitors from very respectable circles came to Dolores' villa; and already, at the receptions preceding the séances of the Pleiades, Johannes had met the members of that "ideal community of ideals in common."

There were, of course, besides the countess and Van Lieverlee, only five others; and when Johannes hesitated to add to this number of seven, he was assured that the Constellation was composed of eight visible stars, besides a great many others not visible to the naked eye.

The leader was a General with a gold-embroidered collar and a grey, closely-cut beard. He had a powerful, commanding voice, and spoke with great respect of the present dynasty. Johannes wondered that he could think of anything other than cannon and battles; but it appeared that he had a very gentle heart, and was extraordinarily curious concerning the immaterial and the life on the other side of the grave.

He even seemed to be conscious that his blood-thirsty trade did not tally with his philosophical researches, and therefore preferred that no one should know he belonged to this ideal community — a weakness common to all the members of the Pleiades.

Then there were a senator and his wife — both of them very courtly and fashionable persons. The husband had exquisitely cut grey hair, and a handsome white beard, small hands, and thin legs. The wife, who was an invalid, had a languishing voice, a discontented face, and a manner that became earnest and excited as soon as things were mentioned of highest import to the society.

Then there was Professor Bommeldoos — an impressive man, who certainly would have been chosen as leader had it not been known that at heart he scorned and condemned such researches. He took part only at the urgent request of the countess, to whose beauty he was not insensible, for as a representative of pure science she desired him to be present. Professor Bommeldoos was awfully learned — his Greek was as fluent as water, and he had, so to speak, every conceivable

system of philosophy under his thumb. He was so much taken up with himself that he paid no attention to any reply he might have received to his discourse. He thought only of his own words, and if he did not receive instant assent, or if some one, with a bow, wished to differ from him, he turned himself about, and declared the hearer to be an ignoramus.

These bad manners, however, were the exception among the well-bred Pleiades; but they were endured as being a necessary attribute of his great erudition.

The seventh, and last, was an Honorable Lady, no longer young. She was of noble birth, fat, unattractive, and as ignorant as Professor Bommeldoos was learned. Every one of her observations was crushed by him, with cold disdain, under some obscure quotation or other. Whereupon the Honorable Lady, smiling insipidly, became silent, but with a face which seemed to say that she was by no means convinced.

Johannes waited in great suspense for the first séance, above all because of the possibility that Markus would perceive his longings, and, as Van Lieverlee surmised, suddenly appear.

The members of the society gathered just as if they had no other thought than to make a casual evening visit. The Privy Counselor, who bore a threefold name, and whom therefore I shall call simply the Privy Counselor, chatted with the fat Honorable Lady about the climate on the Riviera, along which he had been traveling with his wife, for her health's sake, and whence he had brought her back home more ill than when she left. The General chatted on about the early shell-peas, while Van Lieverlee talked softly in French to the countess, to the silent distraction of Johannes. No one appeared to care to know the object of their meeting.

But this dissimulation was rudely shaken by Professor Bommeldoos, who, having scarcely entered, burst out in his frightful voice:

"Come, followers of Allan Kardec! Where is the keeper of the door — he who shall unlock for us that portal through

which we may step from the kingdom of the three dimensions into that of the fourth dimension?"

Thereupon he looked searchingly into the faces of those present. They smiled in a rather embarrassed way, and glanced at the General. After a good, thorough clearing of his throat, the General said:

"If you refer to our medium, Professor, there is none yet; but we should — ah . . . can — ah . . . begin to form the circle, in order to prepare ourselves, in some degree, for . . ."

During oppressive silence, a round, marble-topped table was drawn by the gentlemen into the middle of the room. The assistance of the servants was not desired.

"Look! See what a crack was made in it the other time," whispered the Honorable Lady, "when it rose completely up into the air, you know. We could not possibly hold it down."

"Ought not the light to be put out?" asked the Professor, who had not yet attended a séance.

"No, no," said the General. "A little lower — just a little lower."

"Very well! H'm — h'm!" muttered Bommeldoos.

"The Professor must not counteract with his irony," said the countess, pleasantly.

"Mevrouw," declaimed the Professor, solemnly, "in the researches of a philosopher nothing is trifling, nothing is ridiculous. He stands for all phenomena like an unbroken mirror. Darwin had the contrabass played to an audience of sprouting garden-beans, in order to observe the effect of music on vegetation. And if you have read my book about Plotinus . . ."

"Pardon, Professor, I have not."

"What! Then the one about the material basis of ideas?"

"Nor that."

"Then you certainly must read my book upon Magic. Do not forget it, or I will not come the next time. Plotinus says . . ."

Here followed a quotation in Greek that I will spare you, but which was listened to with respect. Then the Honorable Lady chimed in with:

"Shall we not sing something? It puts one in such a good frame of mind."

They all agreed with her, but no one wanted to begin. The General seated himself mettlesomely at the table, and spread out his hands on the top of it.

With simulated unconcern, one after another followed him. At last, Johannes also was invited to take part.

"Is the young gentleman a novice in psychical fields?" asked the Privy Counselor, condescendingly.

"My friend Johannes ought to have strong mediumistic powers. I hope that those present will not object . . . " said the countess.

"Not at all, not at all," said the General. "In this research we are all as ignorant as children."

"I do not in the least agree with you, there, General," blustered Bommeldoos. "Have you read all the writings of Phillipus Aureolus Paracelsus Theophrastus Bombastus ab Hohenheim, born in 1493, died in 1541?"

"I have not, Professor," replied the warrior, meekly.

"Well, I have, and it was not child's work. Magic is a subdivision — and only a small subdivision — of philosophy. In my library I have a hundred and seventy-five volumes, all that subdivision — all of them on magical subjects, from Apollonius Tyannæus to Swedenborg, Hellenbach, and Du Prell. Do you call that childish ignorance?"

"Suffer the little children to come unto me," said the fat Honorable Lady, improving the opportunity to make a quotation, also.

"I am not going to drive them away," said Bommeldoos, "if only they do not imagine they know as much as I do."

Johannes did not at all imagine that, and, hands upon the marble top of the table, he waited very patiently for the manifestations.

They sat a considerable time, however, without anything unusual having happened. Van Lieverlee said to the countess, softly yet quite distinctly: "Neither are those magical powers of Johannes very unusual."

Then came the medium — a demure young woman of the middle class, who made deep courtesies to right and left, and appeared not to feel quite at home in this dignified society.

She had scarcely seated herself at the table, before the wife of the Privy Counselor cried out in a shrill voice: "I feel it already. There it goes!"

"Yes, a genuine shock," declared the Honorable Lady, in an excited tone.

"Be calm," commanded the General.

The table began turning and tilting, and now the questions were plied. The first spirit to put in an appearance gave general advice about reading the Bible, and about faithful attendance at church. This advice seemed to make a deep impression on the circle. Asked his name, the spirit replied, "Moses." This gave Professor Bommeldoos the opportunity to inquire if Moses himself had written the Pentateuch. "Yes," was the reply. But when the Professor queried him in Hebrew, Moses said that the medium needed a brief rest; and after that rest he left it to some one else to make reply. In succession followed Homer and Cicero, who both lamented that they had not known the true faith; and after them Napoleon, who evinced great sorrow for the amount of blood he had caused to be shed. One could see that this gave the General food for reflection.

But, save that all these people urged, in the main, the practice of purity and piety, it was unanimously demonstrated that Johannes and the countess were the ones from whose co-operation the greatest results were to be expected. They would have to study up these matters, and apply themselves to automatic writing.

Then Johannes had to sit beside the countess and hold her hand, and thus, together, write down the communications of

the spirits. This was a bitter-sweet experience for Johannes. Would Markus come now?

But Markus did not come, nor any news of poor Heléne, nor of her father.

Yet a spirit disclosed itself who treated this ideal society in a very impolite, bearish manner. He called himself Thomas, and would not reply when Bommeldoos asked him if he was Thomas the Apostle, or Thomas Aquinas, or Thomas à Kempis, or Thomas Morus.

"Do you know us?" asked the Privy Counselor.

"Yes, you are heathen and malefactors."

"Will you help us?"

"Confess, pray, and do penance," said Thomas.

"Will you tell us something of the hereafter?" asked Countess Dolores, paling somewhat.

"Hell, if you go on this way," said Thomas.

"Then what must I do?" asked Dolores, almost trembling.

"Be converted," was the reply.

"That is all well and good," said Bommeldoos, "but I know at least twelve religions, and twice as many systems of philosophy. To which of them must we be converted?"

"Be still, you heretic," was the parting shot.

Such treatment as that was a bit too much for the learned Professor, and he declared he had had enough of it, and could better employ his time.

The society was of one mind — that the manifestations this evening had not been propitious. The medium ascribed this to her own indisposition. She had suffered the entire day with a headache, and, moreover, there were — she was certain of it — unfavorable influences present. Saying this, she cast a reproachful glance at the Professor.

"Oh, it was much more lively the last time," said the Honorable Lady. "Was it not truly extraordinary, General?"

"Phenomena cannot be forced," replied the General. "One has to practise patience. We would better stop, for the present."

So the session ended, and after the medium, with many obsequious airs, had taken her leave, they partook of a delicious supper.

Johannes retained his place beside the hostess, and the remembrance of the soft, warm hand that he had been able to hold in his own for so long a time made him very happy. He was not disappointed. Oh, no, he was elated — his excellent friend was so nice, so good, and so kind to him.

A new Dutch waitress in black and wearing a snow-white cap with long strings was in attendance. Johannes paid no attention to her, but noticed that Van Lieverlee looked at her repeatedly.

"Did you not think it a remarkable evening?" asked the countess, after the guests were gone and they were alone together.

"I thought it splendid," replied Johannes, with sincerity.

"They called it a failure," said the countess, "but it impressed me quite otherwise. I feel greatly moved."

"I too," said Johannes.

"Do you? That makes me happy. So you, also, feel that we need to be converted?"

"I do not think that," said Johannes, "but you have been so good to me."

Countess Dolores made no reply, but she smiled and pressed his hand kindly. Johannes retained her hand, while he looked into her eyes with passionate devotion.

The waitress had been standing at the buffet, placing silver in the drawer. At this moment she turned round, and when Johannes in some confusion looked at her to see if she had paid any attention to his all-too-tender airs and words, he suddenly found himself gazing into a pair of well-known, light-grey eyes.

They were Marjon's eyes, and they wore a look of unutterable anguish and sorrow.

It seemed to Johannes as if his heart had stopped

beating. He sat like one paralyzed, until his friend's hand slipped from his clasp. He appeared to wish to rise—to say something . . .

But Marjon put her finger to her lips, and went quietly on with her work.

IX

AMONG the visitors at Villa Dolores was a Roman prelate—a friend of Dolores' deceased husband. He was heavy of build and always cheerful, and never talked on religious subjects. Sometimes he came sociably, as a table guest, and besides a fund of anecdotes he also had much to say that was instructive, to which Johannes listened eagerly.

He was a far more amiable person than Dominie Kraalboom, and Johannes liked him much better. He understood all about flowers and animals, about poetry, paintings, and music; and of special interest were his observations on beautiful Italy and holy Rome, where he had traveled and studied.

Of course he did not belong to the Pleiades; and if by rare exception the circle was referred to in his presence, he, being both cautious and courteous, remained silent.

Yet, after that first meeting of which I have told you in the preceding chapter, Johannes observed that he came oftener than before, and also at unconventional hours; and when Johannes came into the room he noticed that the conversation between the countess and the priest was suddenly broken off. He saw, also, that his hostess had more color in her cheeks, as if she had been speaking of weighty matters.

"Your Mahatma does not come," said Dolores once, when, after such a time as this, the priest had just taken his leave. "He has turned his back upon us."

"Yes, Mevrouw," Johannes was forced to admit.

"I think myself very fortunate in having found a wise man who can help me."

"Do you mean Father Canisius?"

"Yes. Do you know what he says? That we are on a dangerous road in the pursuit of our object. It is all the work of the devil, he declares. And everything he says agrees

with what we heard that evening. Would you not like to have a chat with him?"

But Johannes hesitated. He had not yet spoken to Marjon, and was hoping to hear from her something concerning his brother.

Marjon evaded him, and he had not found an opportunity to meet her alone. Every morning he went to his room with a beating heart, hoping to find her there busied in putting it to rights; but generally it was already in order, and he found merely the traces of her care: his clothing brushed and folded, his linen looked over and nicely placed in the linen-press, and fresh flowers in the little vase on his table. He observed everything, and was deeply touched by it.

But she seemed careful to be always in company with the other servants, and to bear herself as stiffly and coldly as the most pert, demure, and well-trained chambermaid possibly could. Not a word nor a look nor a sign betrayed her acquaintance with Johannes; and he often heard the countess declare to her visitors that she had never before found so quickly a good Dutch servant.

Neither had Van Lieverlee recognized her, but was simply struck with her peculiar, somewhat alien manner, which led him to ask the lady of the house if she knew the origin of the girl.

"No," said the countess; "she was recommended to me by an old friend, and apparently she deserves all that was said of her."

But Johannes' yearning for Markus grew stronger every day. He both dreaded and longed for his coming, and he wished that in some way he might be delivered from his uncertainty.

Therefore he was ever on the alert to seize an opportunity for speaking with Marjon alone. One evening he detained her in the hall under the pretense of inquiring about his shoes.

"Where did you leave Keesje?" he asked in a low voice.

"You know very well," replied Marjon, curtly, and in the same low tone.

Johannes did indeed know, and for that very reason he had asked the question.

"Yes, but where is he who has Keesje?"

"I do not know; and even if I did, I would not tell you. He knows his time."

At that moment Countess Dolores passed by.

"Johannes," said she, "I am having a talk with Father Canisius. If you wish you may come, too."

Johannes questioned Marjon with a look; but there fell before her eyes that impenetrable veil which always completely hid her inmost self from every stranger.

Father Canisius was in the parlor, seated in a low chair. His black soutane fitted tightly over his robust body, and his heavy feet in their buckled shoes were planted wide apart. He was polishing his spectacles with a handkerchief, and as Johannes entered the room he put them quickly in place, and turned his large eyes, full of interest, toward the door.

When Johannes came forward he took his hand in a kindly way and drew him nearer. Johannes looked into the broad, smooth-shaven face with its flat nose and sagacious eyes.

"Have you never had good guidance, my boy? Without it life is difficult and dangerous."

"I have indeed had good guidance, Mijnheer," said Johannes, "but I have more than once preferred to go my own way; and then I disregarded my guidance."

"But was it *good* guidance?" asked the priest.

"I had a good father; later, I found a dear, good friend. But I left them both."

"Why did you do that? Were you not satisfied with what they taught you? What was it that took you from them?"

Johannes hesitated.

"Were they too strict?"

Johannes shook his head.

"Then what was lacking that you found elsewhere but not with them?"

"I do not know, Mijnheer, what to call it. It is not pleasure, for I am willing to endure much suffering. And yet again it is the most glorious thing I know. I think it is what is meant by 'the beautiful.'"

On saying this, he bethought himself that it was not merely "the beautiful" for which he had left his father, and that the emotion which had led him away from Markus, and which he had felt for the two little girls, might indeed be called love.

"Perhaps it is also called love," said he.

Father Canisius considered a moment, and throwing a glance at the countess, he said:

"Then did you not find the love of that good father and the good friend enough for you?"

"Oh, yes, yes," said Johannes, with spirit. "But it was from them I had learned that I ought to follow what seemed to me, in all sincerity, the most beautiful, and to do what I truly thought best."

The priest dropped Johannes' hand, and pressed his own fleshy palms together, while he slowly and sorrowfully shook his great head, gave a deep sigh, and continued to look at Countess Dolores with a very serious face.

"Poor boy!" said he then. "Poor, poor boy!"

Then, lifting his head and looking Johannes straight in the eyes, he said: "No, Johannes, they were not good guides. I do not know them, and I shall not judge them, but I assure you positively that with such teaching, such guidance, you are bound to be lost unless granted extraordinary grace."

A long silence ensued. Johannes was touched, and even startled.

"What do you mean?" he finally stammered with trembling lips.

"Listen, Johannes," said Countess Dolores. "Father Canisius is very wise — a man of large experience in life."

"Do you believe in God, Johannes?" asked the priest.

"I know that I have a Father who understands me," said Johannes, slowly.

"Do you mean a heavenly Father? Very well; so far, so good. But you must have observed also that there is an evil one — Satan — who goes about deceiving us."

"Yes," said Johannes, promptly, thinking of his many disappointments. "That is so. I have observed it."

"Well, then, Satan is always lying in wait for us, like a wolf lurking near the sheep. One who trusts only in his own powers and his own opinion is like a sheep that strays from the fold. The wolf surely waits his opportunity, and, unless God perform a miracle, that sheep is lost."

Johannes felt the fear strike to his heart, and he could not speak.

"We first notice the approach of this wolf by a terrible sensation. That is God's warning to us. That feeling is doubt. Have you ever known what it was to doubt, Johannes?"

Johannes, with clenched fists and compressed lips, nodded in quick and utter dismay. Yes, yes, *yes!* He had known what it was to doubt.

"I thought so," said Father Canisius, calmly. "It is a fearful feeling, is it not?" Raising his voice, he proceeded: "It is like the sound of howling wolves in the distance — to the wandering sheep. Let it not be in vain that you are warned, Johannes."

After a pause he continued:

"Doubt itself is a sin. He who doubts is on an inclined plane that slopes toward a fall. Have you ever heard of the hideous octopus, Johannes — that soft sea-monster with the huge eyes, and eight long arms full of suckers which, one by one, he winds around the limbs of a swimmer, before dragging him down to the deeps? You have? Well, Satan is such an octopus. Unnoticed, he reaches out his long arms, and twines them about your limbs — holding them fast with his suckers until he can stab his sharp beak into your heart.

Doubt is not only a warning but positive proof that Satan has already gripped you. It is the beginning of his power. The end is everlasting pain and damnation."

Johannes raised his head and looked at the priest, who was watching the effect of his words.

In spite of his distress there was suddenly aroused in Johannes a feeling of resistance. He felt that an effort was being made to frighten him; and even if he was but a stripling he would not allow that.

"My Father does not condemn those who err in good faith," said he.

Father Canisius observed that by bearing on too hard he had awakened a rebellious spirit. He therefore became more cautious, and resumed gently:

"Certainly, Johannes. God is infinitely good and merciful. But have you not remarked that there is a justice from which you cannot escape? And do you believe that one who has been led astray can plead, 'I am not guilty, for I was deceived'? No, Johannes, you take this matter too lightly. Punishment attends sin. That is God's inexorable law. And only if He had failed to warn us—only if He had not accurately revealed to us His will, could you call that cruel and unjust. But we *are* warned — *are* instructed — and may follow good guidance. If then we continue to stray, it is our own fault and we must not complain."

"You mean the Bible, do you not, Mijnheer?"

"The Bible and the Church," said the Father, not pleased at the tone of this question. "I very well comprehend, my boy, that you, with your poetic temperament and your craving for the beautiful, have not found peace in the cold, barren, and barbarous creed of Protestantism. But the Church gives you everything — beauty, warmth, love, and exalted poetry. In the Church alone can you find peace and perfect security. You know, however, do you not, that the flock has need of a Shepherd? And you know also who that Shepherd is?"

"Do you mean the Pope?"

"I mean Christ, Johannes — our Redeemer, of whom the Pope is merely a human representative. Do you know this Shepherd? Do you not know Jesus Christ?"

"No, Mijnheer," replied Johannes, in all simplicity, "I do not know him at all."

"I thought as much; and that is why I said to you, 'Poor boy.' But if you wish to learn to know him, I will gladly help you. Do you wish me to?"

"Why not, Mijnheer?" said Johannes.

"Very well. Begin, then, by accompanying the countess to the church she has promised me to attend — Have you, indeed, arranged to go?"

"Yes, Father," replied the countess. "Oh, I am so happy that you take such an interest in us! Johannes will surely always be grateful to you."

Father Canisius pressed very cordially the hands of both of his new disciples, and, with an expression of calm satisfaction on his face, he took his leave.

The children came in, and nothing further was said that day between Johannes and his friend concerning the matter; but the countess was much more animated than usual, and wonderfully kind toward Johannes. She even kissed him again when they said good-night, as once before she had done — when with her children.

Johannes could not sleep. He was full of anxiety, and in a state of high nervous tension. When the house grew still, and the lonely, mysterious night had come, came also fear and doubt and faint-heartedness. He doubted that he doubted, and feared the doubt of the doubt. He heard the howling of the wolf that lay in wait for the wandering sheep; he felt the slippery, slimy, crawling grasp of those terrible arms, that unnoticed, had fastened their suckers everywhere to his limbs; he saw the great yellow eyes of the octopus, with the narrow, slit-shaped pupil; and he felt the mouth searching and feeling about his body for his heart, that it might stab it with the

sharp, parrot-like beak. With chattering teeth he lay wide awake between the sheets — shivering and shaking, while the perspiration poured from him.

Then he heard a faint, creaking sound on the stairs, followed by a light footfall at the doorway. His door was opened, and a slim, dark form came cautiously up to the bed.

He felt a soft, warm hand on his clammy forehead, and heard Marjon's voice whispering:

"You must be faithful, Jo, and not let them make you afraid. The Father likes brave and loyal children."

"Yes, Marjon," said Johannes; and the shivering ceased, while a gentle warmth stole over and through his entire body. He dropped asleep so soon that he did not notice when she left the room.

X

"JUMP out!" cried Wistik, excitedly, swinging his little red cap. "Come on — jump!"

Johannes saw no way of doing so. The window was high and quite too small. Perhaps by climbing still higher he might find a way out. A flight of stairs, and another garret. Still another narrow passage, and another stairway. Then he caught another glimpse of Wistik, astride a large eagle.

"Come on, Johannes!" cried he. "You must dare to — then nothing can happen."

Johannes was ready to venture, but he could not do it. The little window was again out of reach. Back again. Empty garrets, steep stairs — stairs without end. And there was the octopus! He knew it. Again and again he saw one of the long arms with its hundreds of suckers. Sometimes one of them lay stretched along the garret floor, so that he had to step over it. Sometimes one meandered over the stairs that Johannes was obliged to mount. The whole house was full of them.

And out-of-doors the sun was shining, and the blue air was clear and bright. Wistik was circling around the house, seated on the great eagle — the very same eagle they had come across before, in Phrygia.

Out-of-doors also rang the voice of Marjon. Hark! She was singing. She, too, was in the open air. She seemed to have made a little song, herself — words and melody — for Johannes had never before heard either of them.

"Nightly there come to me,
White as the snow,
Wings that I know to be
Strange, here below.

THE QUEST

"Up into ether blue,
Pure and so high,
Mounting on pinions true,
Singing, I fly.

"Sea-gull like then I soar —
Not light more swift —
So near to Heaven's door
To rock and drift!"

Alas! Johannes could not yet do that. He had no wings. He did, indeed, see rays of light at times, and here and there a bit of blue sky. But he could not get to it — he could not get out! And on he went again — upstairs, downstairs, through doorways, halls, and great garrets. And the terrible arms lay everywhere.

Again Marjon sang:

"Marvelous, matchless blue
I cleave in flight.
The spheres are not so fleet
As my winged feet.

"World after world speed by
Under my hand,
New ones I ever espy,
Countless as sand.

"Blue of the skies!
Blue of the deep!
Now make me wise —
No more to weep."

Johannes also heard the blue calling him; but what the magic word was he could not guess. He was on his knees now, before a small, garret window through which he could barely thrust his arm. Behind him he could hear a shuffling and sliding. It was the long arm again!

"It's a shame!" said Wistik again, his little face red with anger, "the way they have maligned me! I ought to be hail-fellow with the Evil One for not letting you be. What a rascal he is! Do you want to be rid of me, Johannes?"

"No, Wistik. I believe that you are good even if you have often disappointed me and made me very restless. You have shown me so much that is beautiful. But why do you not help me now? If you call me you ought to help me."

"No," said Wistik; "you must help yourself. You must act, you understand? Act! You know that *It* is behind you, do you not?"

"Yes, yes!" shrieked Johannes.

"But, boy, do not shriek at me! Shriek at *It*. It is much more afraid of you than you are of *It*. Try!"

That was an idea. Johannes set his teeth, clenched his fists, turned round and shouted:

"Out, I say! Out with you—you ugly, miserable wretch!"

I even believe he used a swear-word. But one ought to forgive him, because it was from sudden excitement. When he saw that the long arms shriveled and drew away, and that it grew still in the house—when he felt his distress abating and saw the sunlight burst out, revealing a spacious deep-blue sky—then his anger calmed down, and he felt rather ashamed of having been so vehement.

"That is good!" said Wistik. "But do not be unmannerly—do not scold. That is hateful. But nevertheless, act, and learn compassion."

Johannes was now no longer afraid; he shouted for joy. Yes, he was bathed in tears of thankfulness and relief. Oh, the glorious blue sky!

"Now you know it, once for all," said Wistik.

Marjon's voice again in song. But this time very different—the air of one of her old songs merely hummed: a cus-

tomary calling sound — a soft suppressed little tune. And thereupon followed a “tap, tap, tap,” at his chamber door, to tell him that it was half-past eight and time to get up.

Fresh energy, a feeling of high spirits and courage, filled Johannes that day. At last he was going to act — to do something to end his difficulties.

First, he sought an opportunity to speak with Van Lieverlee. He went to brave him in his own rooms where he had never yet been. There he saw a confused medley of dissimilar things: some rare old pieces of furniture, and oriental rugs; a large collection of pipes and weapons; a few modern books; on the wall some picture-studies of which Johannes could not glean the meaning; some French posters picturing frivolous girls. With the same glance he saw mediæval prints of saints in ecstasy, and plaster casts of wanton women, and the heads of emaciated monks. There were images of Christ in hideous nakedness, and lithographs and casts so blood-curdling, crazy, and bizarre that they made Johannes think of his most frightful dreams.

“What are you here for?” asked Van Lieverlee tot Endegeest who, with an empty pipe in his mouth and a face full of displeasure, lay stretched out languidly on the floor.

“I have come to ask something,” said Johannes, not exactly knowing how to begin.

“Not in the mood for it,” drawled Van Lieverlee.

The day before, Johannes would have wilted. Not so today. He seated himself, and thought of what Wistik had said — “Act!”

“I will not wait any longer,” he began again. “I have waited too long already.”

“The big priest has had you in hand, has he not?” said Van Lieverlee, with a little more interest.

“Yes,” replied Johannes; “did you know it? What do you think of him?”

Van Lieverlee gaped, nodded, and said: “A knowing one!

Just let him alone. Biceps! you know — biceps! All physique and intellectuality. Representative of his entire organization. Can't help respecting it, Johannes. How those fellows can thunder at the masses! One can't help taking off his hat to them. The whole lot of the Reformed aren't in it with them! Theirs is only half-work; they are irresolute in everything they give or take; *krita-krita*, as we say in Sanscrit. Whether you do good or do ill, always do it wholly, not by halves; otherwise you yourself become the dupe. If you would keep the people down, hold them down completely. To establish a church, and at the same time talk of liberty of conscience, as do the Protestants — that is stuff and nonsense — nothing comes of it. You may see that from the results. Every dozen Protestants have their own church with its own dogmas, with its own little faith which alone can save, and with its little coterie of the elect! No, compared with them the Roman Church is at least a respectable piece of work — a formidable concern."

"Do you believe in it?" asked Johannes.

Van Liverlee shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall have to think it over a while longer. If I think it agreeable to believe in it, then I shall do so. But it will be in the genuine old Church, with Adam and Eve, and the sun which circles around the earth; not in that modernized, up-to-date Church, altered according to the advancement of science — with electric light and the doctrine of heredity. How disgusting! No, I must have the church of Dante, with a real hell full of fire and brimstone, right here under our earth, and Galileo inside of it."

"But I did not come to inquire about that," said Johannes, sticking to his point. "I am not content, and you ought to help me. What I have heard in the Pleiades, and from Father Canisius does not satisfy me. I am sure, also, that it is not in this way I shall find my friend again; and now I am determined to find him."

"Where, then, do you wish to look for him?"

"I believe," said Johannes, "that if he is to be found anywhere, it is among the poor — the laborers."

"Ah! Would you take part in the labor agitation? Well, you can do so, but I do not agree to go with you. You know what I think about that. Socialism has got to come, but I am not going to concern myself with it. It smells too much of the proletariat. I am very glad of the birth of a new society, but a birth is always an unsavory incident. I leave that to the midwife. I'll wait until the infant is thoroughly washed and tidy before making its acquaintance."

"But I wish to look for my friend."

Van Lieverlee stood up and stretched himself.

"You bore me," said he, "with that eternal chatter about your friend."

"Act!" thought Johannes, and he went on:

"You promised to show me the way to what I am seeking, and to give an explanation of my experiences. But I know no more than I knew before."

"Your own fault, my friend. Result of pride and self-seeking. Why have you had so little to do with me? You kept yourself with those two little girls. Did they enlighten you?"

"Quite as much as you did," replied Johannes.

Van Lieverlee looked up in surprise. That was insubordination — open resistance. However, he thought it better to take no notice, so he said:

"But since you will join the labor movement, then you must find out for yourself. I won't hold you back. Go, then, and look for your Mahatma!"

"But how am I to begin? You have so many friends — do you know some one who can help me?"

Van Lieverlee thought about it while looking steadily at Johannes. Then he said, deliberately:

"Very well. I know of one who is in the middle of it. Would you like to go to him?"

"Yes, at once, if you please."

"Good," said Van Lieverlee. Together they set out. The friend referred to was the editor of a journal — a Doctor of Laws. Felbeck was his name.

His office was far from luxurious in appearance. The steps were worn, and the door-mat was trodden to shreds. It was a dreary and sombre place. Large posters and caricatures were pasted on the walls, and on the table lay many pamphlets and papers. Also there were writing-desks, letter-boxes, and rush-bottomed chairs. Two clerks sat there writing, and a few men, with hats on and cigars in their mouths, were talking. There was a continual running to and fro of people — printers' devils, and men in slouch hats.

Dr. Felbeck himself had a pale, thin face, square jaws, bristling hair, and a black goatee and moustache. His eyes were deep-set, and they looked at Johannes keenly, in a manner not fitted to put him into a restful and confiding state of mind.

"This young person," said Van Lieverlee, "wishes, as you express it, to turn his back upon his bourgeois status, and to swell the ranks of the struggling proletariat. Is that what you call it?"

"Well!" said Dr. Felbeck. "He need not be ashamed of it, and you might follow his example, Van Lieverlee."

"Who knows what I may yet do," said Van Lieverlee, "when the proletariat shall have learned to wash itself?"

"What!" said Felbeck. "Would you, a poet, have washed and combed proletarians, with collars and silk hats? No, my friend; with their vile and callous fists they will smash your refined and coddled civilization, like an *etagère* of bric-a-brac in a parlor!" Dr. Felbeck vented his feelings in a blow at the imaginary *etagère*. The attention of a clerk on the other side of the room was arrested, and he stopped his work. Van Lieverlee, too, looked somewhat interested.

"A revolution appeals to me," said Van Lieverlee. "With barricades, and fellows on them with red flags, straggling hair,

and bloodshot eyes. That is n't bad. But you people of the Society of the Future!—Heaven preserve us from that tedious and kill-joy crowd! I would ten times over prefer an obese, over-rich banker with his jeweled rings, who, waxing fat through the misfortunes of simpletons, builds a villa in Corfu, to your future citizen."

"You do not at all understand it yet," said Felbeck, with a slighting laugh. "You are bound to have such notions because you belong to the bourgeois class of which you are an efflorescence. You are obliged to talk like a bourgeois, and versify like one. You cannot do otherwise. You cannot possibly comprehend the proletarian civilization of the future. It is to be evolved from the proletarian class to which we belong, and with which your young friend wishes to connect himself, as I perceive with pleasure."

The clerk across the room came nearer, to listen to the speech of his chief. He was an under-sized young man whose pomaded black hair was parted in the middle. He had a crooked nose straddled by eye-glasses, and thick lips from between which dangled a cigar—even while he spoke. He wore a well-fitting suit, and pointed shoes with gaiters.

"May I introduce myself," said he. "I am Kaas—fellow-partner Isadore Kaas."

"Pleased to meet you," said Van Lieverlee. And Johannes also received a handshake.

"Have you come to register yourself?" the partner asked.

"In what?" asked Johannes, who had not yet exactly gotten the idea of things. "In the proletarian class?"

"As a member of the party," said Kaas.

"What does that imply?" asked Johannes, hesitating.

"It implies," said Felbeck, "that you renounce the privileges of the class to which you are native, and that you range yourself, under the red flag, in the ranks of the International Workingmen's Party—with the struggling proletariat—the party of the future."

"Then what have I to do?"

"Sign your name, make a small contribution, attend the meetings, read our paper, spread our doctrines, and vote for our candidates in the elections."

"Nothing else?" asked Johannes.

"Well, is not that enough?"

"Did you not speak of privileges I must renounce?"

"There, there!" said partner Kaas, "do not make too much of that, to begin with. Don't be frightened. For the present, nothing further is required of you."

"Oh, I was not afraid," said Johannes, a trifle vexed that he should have been misunderstood. "I was even hoping that I might be able to do more."

"So much the better! So much the better!" said Kaas, stepping hurriedly over to his desk again, and eagerly hunting for a pen. "That settles it. Your name, if you please."

But Johannes was not, for the time being, in a very compliant mood. Since he had dared the octopus he had found that he had more than one string to his bow.

"No, I came for something else. I have a dear friend who lives and works for the poor and oppressed. I am looking for him. I saw him last, at the great strike of the miners, in Germany. Since that time I have heard nothing from him, but I know, surely, that he is with the working people. Mijnheer van Lieverlee has told me that you were in the midst of the labor movement. Could you not help me?"

"What's his name?" asked Dr. Felbeck.

"They know him as Markus," replied Johannes, although it cost him an effort to speak the dear name in that place.

"Markus?" repeated the gentleman, considering. "Markus only?"

"Markus Vis," said Johannes, with yet more reluctance.

"Oh! He!" exclaimed partner Kaas.

"Markus Vis?" said Felbeck, turning round to the others in the office. "Is that —?"

"Yes, yes!" interrupted Kaas, "the very same who caused that row at the Exchange."

"Gee! That confounded anarchist!" cried one of the soft-hatted smokers.

"Is he a friend of yours?" asked Dr. Felbeck, with a disdainful sniff.

"Yes, Mijnheer, my best friend," said Johannes, firmly.

"Well, young man, you consort with odd and dangerous friends.

"Do you know where he is?" asked Johannes, quite undisturbed.

"Not I," declared Felbeck, scornfully. "Do any of you happen to know?"

"I rather think somewhere in the neighborhood of Bedlam," said another man.

"Trommel," called Felbeck to a clerk who had kept on writing, "where does Vis hang out at present?"

"Markus Vis?" said partner Trommel. "Well, for the nonce, at the office of an iron foundry. "He has a job there."

"That's a neat berth for him," remarked one of the smokers. "You'll see what a boot-licker he'll be after he puts on a collar."

"What foundry is that?" asked Van Lieverlee.

"In the 'de Ruiter,' of your uncle Mijnheer van Trigt," replied partner Trommel.

"How long has he been there?" asked Van Lieverlee.

"For two or three weeks past."

"Is he a tall dark fellow with a beard, and curling hair, and a jumper?"

"That is it — exactly!" said various voices.

Van Lieverlee swung round, strode up to the window, threw back his head, pulled out his handkerchief, and snorted into it. The bystanders could hardly tell whether he was sneezing, or laughing, or indisposed.

"Excuse me!" he cried out. "Something comical occurred to me."

Then he snorted again, and one could plainly see that he was laughing.

"A Mahatma!" they heard him murmur, in the middle of his laughing. "Oh! Oh! but that is good! A Mahatma!"

Those present looked rather perplexed at this outburst, as if waiting for further explanation.

"If I only had had that description earlier, Johannes," said Van Lieverlee, recovering from his fit of laughter, "we need not have annoyed these gentlemen. Your friend is in my uncle's office. I have seen him several times."

"Then will you go there with me?" asked Johannes. His voice was still firm, but I assure you his eyes were full of tears. However, he controlled himself in the presence of those men and partners.

"Of course, of course! Sometime!" said Van Lieverlee, in high glee; and he actually began laughing again. He made a pretense of trying to control this outburst, but such was his manner that Johannes would have liked to strike him straight in the face.

He did not do it, however, but went down the steps with Van Lieverlee without having enrolled in the proletarian class.

"Well, good-by!" said Van Lieverlee, when they were in the street, giving Johannes' hand an immoderate shake. "I must go to the Soos.* Sometime we will go to the foundry. I'll make some inquiries, first. We'll go sometime — of course — of course!"

With his mouth still twisted in irony, and humming a song, he passed on, in affected indifference. That evening — alone — Johannes hunted for the foundry. But the office was closed and dark, and there was no one about to give him information.

He found in his own little room a small bit of cheer — a vase of forget-me-nots, from Marjon.

* See note, page 520.

XI

"WISTIK, dear," said Johannes, "let me hold your hand. You are such a good and true friend. "I am not sorry any more that I slipped from under Windekind's mantle to listen to you."

"One must not admire oneself — I have always said that," replied Wistik, "but it is very true that I am good, and do not deserve all those mean things said of me. And what is the truth may be acknowledged, even if it be called boasting. Neither bragging nor decrying, but the truth — that is my idea."

Thereupon the little fellow nodded proudly, and set his cap on more firmly.

They were sitting on a rocky coast. To the left the sun was shining brightly upon a steep wall of rose-red rocks. To the right was a gentle upward slope, where trees were growing, with delicate silver-grey foliage. In front of them lay the wide waters of the sea — almost motionless, but slightly stirring with the fresh wind, and sparkling in the light. There was nothing to be seen save red rocks, blue sky, and water. The blue, crystal-clear water lapped and gurgled and splashed about the hollows and chinks in the stone at their feet, and then disappeared in the clefts and caves, where the sea-weed and the coral were. How bright it was! How fresh and spacious!

"I never see Windekind, now," said Johannes. "It is truly sad, for Father Pan's kingdom was most beautiful. But I am resigned, and I believe you when you say that still more beautiful things are to be found. Did I not once think the dunes the most beautiful of all, and fear I never should feel at home anywhere else? But now this strange land seems to me even greater, and I feel at home here also. Where are we, dear Wistik?"

"What difference does it make?" said Wistik, who never willingly admitted he did not know a thing.

"It does not matter," replied Johannes. "The main thing is that I know that I am I — Johannes, and that I see things good and clear; that yesterday I was at that office, and that I sought for Markus at the foundry. And I know too that I might now be seen lying asleep. But yet I am not dreaming, for I am wide awake — quite wide awake, and I remember everything."

"Exactly," agreed Wistik. "Do you recollect what Markus said about remembering?"

He paused a moment, and then went on in a tone that grew softer and more solemn.

"Remembrance, Johannes, is truly a holy thing; for it makes the past — *present*. Now the future to it . . . and then we should be . . ."

"Where, Wistik?"

"In that still autumn day, where the gold on the tree-tops never fades, and a branch never breaks. Do you remember?" asked Wistik, hardly above a whisper.

Johannes nodded, in silence. After a while he said:

"It is splendid, Wistik, that I still remember, even in the night, and stay awake and knowing things, even although my body is asleep in bed. I will not be dead and lie down like a log, forgetting everything, as some do in sleep. Neither will I dream all sorts of nonsense, as if every night I grew foolish. That is shameful. I will not do so."

"Right, Johannes! No one wishes to be dead, and no one wishes to be foolish. And when human beings sleep they are dead, and when they dream they are foolish. None of that for me!"

"I shall try to live in my sleep, and to be wise in my dreams," said Johannes. "But it is hard, and time flies so fast!"

He gazed at his hands, his limbs, and his whole body. He had on his handsomest suit. In amazement, he asked:

"What body is this I have on, Wistik? And how silly to wear clothes. What clothes are these?"

"Do you not see? They are your own clothes."

So it was. Johannes recalled them precisely. And he held in his hand one of Marjon's blue forget-me-nots.

"I do not understand it, Wistik! That I have a dream-life — that I travel with you in the night, that I do understand. But how did my clothes get here? Do my clothes dream, too?"

"Why not?" asked Wistik.

Astonished, Johannes continued to meditate. The water swirled and splashed all about the hollows in the rocks. The exquisite warbling of a yellow-finch rang sweet and plaintive from between the clefts.

"But if everything can dream, then everything must be alive — my trousers too, and my shoes."

"Why not?" said Wistik again. "Just prove to me that they are not."

The way to do that was not clear to Johannes.

"Or perhaps," he resumed, "perhaps I make everything — rocks, sea, light, and clothing. One or the other; I dream it and make it, or it dreams everything itself and makes itself."

"It cannot be any other way," assented Wistik.

"But then, I could make something else if I wished to."

"I think so, too," said Wistik.

"A violin? Could I make a violin, and then play on it?"

"Just try it," said Wistik.

Behold! There was the violin — all ready for him. Johannes took it, and passed the bow over the strings as if he had handled it all his life. The most glorious music came from it — as fine as any he had ever heard.

"Oh, Wistik! Do you hear? Who would ever have thought that I could make such music!"

"'Vraagal can do all that Vraagal wills,' said Pan."

"Yes," said Johannes, musing an instant, and forgetting his violin, which forthwith vanished. "Pan also spoke of the

real Devil, you remember. He said that I must ask you to show him to me."

Wistik had drawn up his little knees and placed his arms about them, his long beard hanging down in front to his shins. Sitting thus, he threw a sidelong glance at Johannes, to see if he intended to do it. Then his entire little body began to tremble. "Shall we not take a little fly out over the ocean?" he asked.

But Johannes was not to be diverted.

"No, I want to see the real Devil."

"Are you sure, Johannes?"

"Yes," replied the latter. He felt himself a hero, now, after having defied the octopus.

"Think well about it," said Wistik.

"What does he look like?"

"What do you think?"

"I think," said Johannes, beginning to look stern and angry, "I think he looks like Marjon's sister."

"Why?" asked Wistik.

"Because I hate her!" Because whatever I think beautiful she always spoils for me, and spoils it through the remembrance alone. She looks like Marjon, and she also looks like that dear friend about whom I am always thinking; and yet she is not the same — she is ugly and common. She kissed me once, and it has spoiled my life."

"Wrong, Johannes! He does not look in the least like that," said Wistik.

Suddenly, Johannes noticed that the bright light was growing dimmer, and that the great firm rocks began to quiver and shake as if seen through heated air, uneven glass, or flowing water.

Then, all at once, he knew, without descreying it, through an inner feeling of nameless distress, that *It* was sitting behind him.

It! You know well, do you not, what it was? It — the

same that sat by the pool when that poor young girl was drowned — It was sitting behind him, huge and deathly still. Sunlight, sea, and rocks — the whole beautiful land, grew hazy and vague.

"He is here," whispered Wistik, "behind us. Bear up, Johannes! You yourself wanted it."

"What shall I do?" asked Johannes, now very nervous and terrified.

"Do not be afraid! For God's sake, do not be afraid! If you do you are lost."

"Shall I cry to God, or to Jesus? Or cross myself?"

"He cares not a bit for such things; he laughs at them; he knows all about them. He makes fun of prayers and the sign of the cross. The main thing is to keep on the alert, and not to be afraid. He will be very friendly, and show you all kinds of pretty and interesting sights, and he will try to make you sleepy and afraid. But you must not fear and must not forget. Above all, keep fast hold of Marjon's flower. And here . . . look!"

With his nervously trembling little fingers Wistik fumbled in the small satchel that always hung by a strap over his shoulder, and took from the jumbled lot of pebbles, scissors, lead-pencils, and dried plants, a little mirror on the frame of which his name was neatly engraved. Then in a voice shaken and nearly speechless with emotion, he said: "Hold that good and fast! It is your salvation. Go now, dear boy. Go!"

And the good little fellow wept.

"Are you not going with me?" asked Johannes, in agitation.

"I am his greatest enemy," said Wistik; "he cannot endure the sight of me. But I will stay in the neighborhood. Call me once in a while, and I will answer you. Then you will know that you are safe. . . ."

"Welcome, Johannes!" said a gentle, friendly voice, and a soft warm hand clasped his own. "You are not embarrassed in my presence, I hope."

Could that be the Evil One? A nice, polite person like that, with such taking manners, and such a caressing voice? Johannes looked round, in amazement, to the place where *It* was. He could not distinguish clearly, nor look straight at the speaker, but he seemed to be an ordinary, modish gentleman, with a frank, smiling face — well dressed in a brown suit and a straw hat.

"Would you not like to make acquaintance with me and my Museum?" continued the speaker. "It is an excellent collection — sure to please you. But what have you in your hand? Not a mirror, is it? Fie! You must throw it away. I have no patience with such mirrors. I abhor them! They foster only conceit."

The soft hand essayed to take away the mirror, but Johannes held it fast, and said firmly: "I will keep the mirror."

He had scarcely said this when there flitted across that smiling, honest-looking face a shade of indescribable malice. It was very brief, but plain enough to cause Johannes a shudder, and to convince him that truly the Evil One stood before him.

But instantly the face became again most frank and winning, and he heard:

"Very well, then, as you please. We will begin by making the acquaintance of my subjects — all of them friends, comrades, or relatives."

Just then Johannes heard again the well-remembered whispering and giggling which he had heard while watching the little hands. On all sides, amid much rustling and shuffling, he heard breathing, coughing, and sniffing — all sorts of queer human sounds, as if the place was thronged with people. But still he could see nothing.

"You fancied I was very different, did you not, Johannes? That I had horns and a tail? That idea is out of date. No one believes it now. Thank God we are forever above that foolish separation of good and evil. That is untenable Dualism. My kingdom is as good as the other."

"What is your name?" asked Johannes.

"They call me King Waan.* Yes, indeed! I am a king, if I do appear so humble. Besides, external pomp is out of fashion. I am a constitutional, bourgeois, democratic king. Here, Bangeling!* Come here! This is my most trusty helper—my right hand, in fact."

Johannes shuddered at the sight of Bangeling—a shrinking, stooping, pale, and loathsome youngster. His eyes were red-rimmed, and glanced shiftingly right and left—never straight in front. His lean knees knocked against each other, and every moment his rag-covered body twitched with terror, and he cried: "Oh, Heaven! Oh, God! Now you will catch it! It is too late! Too la-a-ate!"

To hear and see this repeatedly, without becoming frightened oneself, was not easy; but Johannes pressed his flower close to his breast and cried:

"Wistik!"

"Ay, ay!" he heard his good little friend shout.

But the voice sounded from above, and far away. And suddenly Johannes had a very distinct sensation of falling, fast as lightning, down fathomless depths, although everything around him remained the same.

"Are we falling down below?" he asked.

King Waan gave Johannes a falsely-sweet smile. "One should not ask such impolite questions when making a visit," said he.

"Get away!" cried Johannes to Bangeling, who was now standing close beside them, twitching and whining. Then a throng of frightful figures pushed forward, trying to approach him, grinning, twisted, misformed faces—some with big purple noses, others with drooling lips—still others pale, and passive, with closed eyes, but with scornful muttering mouths.

Johannes knew these figures well; he had often when a child seen them in his dreams. And doubtless you also have seen many of them in the night—just before the measles broke out, or after you have eaten too much pie for dinner.

And you were very much afraid of them, were you not?

* See note, page 520.

Perhaps as much as formerly Johannes was. But this time he was not in the least afraid. When they came too near, he called out in a fierce voice: "Back!" Then they grew pale, and crumpled up like withered toadstools.

"This one is Ginnegap!"* said the Devil, pointing out a girl-like being with open mouth, dull eyes, and a finger in each nasty nostril, who was constantly tittering. "Another excellent assistant of mine. Here are Labbekak* and Goedzak;* charming twins, compact of goodness and charity. Just look! They quiver and quake like jelly. They have no bones, and they never did any wrong. If they do not belong in heaven, who does?"

"Of course they have no sense," said Johannes.

"But here, then — this one — an old acquaintance of yours. Maybe you think he has no wits, either?"

Who was it Johannes saw there? Pluizer, in truth — his old enemy Pluizer! But he lacked a good deal of looking so pert and fierce as formerly. Upon seeing Johannes he hid himself behind the back of a stout, dumpy demon.

"A little to one side, Sleurl!" said the king to the bulky devil. "Give Johannes a peep at his old friend."

But Sleurl did not budge. He was very sluggish. Pluizer called out:

"Does Death know about it, Johannes — that you are already here?"

"What is this place, really?" asked Johannes. "Hell? Is it here that Dante was?"

"Dante?" asked the Devil. And all his retainers whispered and tittered and chattered: "Dante? Dante? Dante?"

"Surely," resumed the king, "you must mean that nice place full of light where it is so hot and smells so bad; where sand melts; where rivers of blood are seething, and the boiling pitch is ever bubbling; where they scream and yell and curse and lament, and swear at one another."

"Yes," said Johannes. "Dante told about that."

"But, my little friend!" said the Devil, affably, "that is

* See note, page 520.

not here, as you can very well see. That is not my kingdom. That is the kingdom of another who, they say, is called Love. With me, no one suffers. I am not so cruel as that. I cause no one pain."

"I know that well," said Johannes, "for so long as I have pain I am alive and am warned. Is it not so, Wistik?"

"Yes!" cried the little fellow, his voice now sounding as if far in the distance — up above.

"We are falling all the time!" said Johannes, in great alarm.

"Do not think about it. Does it make you dizzy? I thought you were so level-headed. Just give this a look. This is my cabinet of curiosities."

And before Johannes knew that he had entered anything he found himself in a very small, close room. It was exactly like a bathroom with low ceilings, and was brightly lighted.

"You did not think to find it so well lighted here, *did* you?"

"Trick-light!" shouted Wistik, his voice coming faintly from above.

"Look! Here lies an acquaintance of yours."

And King Waan pointed to a straight white form that lay on the stone floor. It was Heléne; and Johannes saw that she was calmly sleeping.

Two imps stood looking at her; one was Bangeling; the other, equally small and dirty, stood gnawing his nails. His head, with its misshapen ears, was much too big for him. He had on a barret-cap of aniline blue velvet, with russet ribbons, a pale-green blouse of Scotch plaid, and short trousers, as purple as spoiled berry-juice.

"That is Degeneracy," said Waan. "These two brought her here; a deserving deed. We hope to keep her. Look! See how peacefully she sleeps."

The sight of the pale, still sleeper, with her outspread black hair, made Johannes also feel drowsy. But he looked in his little mirror, holding his eyes open, hard, and called: "Heléne!"

The long dark lashes were lifted just a little.

"Pst! Not a word!" said the king. "Here we come to number two — a pretty and clever piece of work."

By a little door, so low and narrow that Johannes had to wriggle his way through it, they entered the next place. They were in an extremely smart little church — a dolls' church. The walls were bare and white, and little candles were burning. In the pulpit stood a tiny little dominie, preaching fervidly, gesticulating with hand and head.

"Dominie Kraalboom!" cried Johannes, in astonishment. Who is he raving at?"

"Look at him, Johannes!" said Waan. "Only do not think he is dead. In order to come here one does not have to wait till death. And do you not see at whom he is raving? Take a good look."

"Reflectors!" exclaimed Johannes. In reality the little church was empty, but it was everywhere furnished with pretty little mirrors, and in each one of them was reflected the dominie's little face surrounded by a halo.

"Those mirrors are of peculiar manufacture. I make much use of them. The imported article alone I cannot endure. Look! here is the counterpart."

Another little church — just as smart and neat and light. But here there were many more candles, also flowers and images. The walls were gaudily painted with pictures, and Father Canisius stood in glittering, gold-embroidered garments, praying and mumbling before the altar.

Johannes looked up at the stained-glass windows. It was as dark as pitch behind them.

"What is outside there?" he asked. "Just let me look out." And he thought he could hear the snickering and giggling of the imps who were peering through the windows.

"Keep away! Silence!" cried the king, sternly.

"Wistik!" called Johannes.

"Ay!" sounded the voice, now very fine, and far away. And they kept falling, falling.

Through a long, narrow passage they went to the next number. It did not smell very fresh there, and Johannes soon noticed that this stale-smelling apartment corresponded with what they usually called at home "the best room."

In the middle of the white-wood floor stood an overturned waste-water pail. A puddle of thick, offensive fluid lay trickling around it.

"Under this," said King Waan, "sits one of the most remarkable specimens in my collection. It is a little creature having the habit of describing precisely everything it sees. His watchword is: '*Truth Above Everything!*' He could not have a finer one. I make very interesting experiments with him. Sometimes I put him here, sometimes there. Just now he is under this pail. Listen to him!"

A light little voice came monotonously out from under the pail:

"A rich, soft greyish violet shading off through brown into cream-white, clot-curdling stripe coagulations; long flittery-fluttery down-trickling welter-whirls filtering through pale-yellow toned-down dully shining topazy vaults; faint phlegmy greyish-green dozing off . . ."

And thus the voice went on until Johannes began to get quite qualmish and drowsy.

"Is not that nice? Lately, I had him in a cuspidor. You should have heard him then. Here is his label."

And he pointed to a trim little tag on which was marked: *Division, Fine Arts. Naturalist, var. Word-Artist. Locality: Terra Firma of Europe. Rather rare.*

"Is Van Lieverlee here, also?" asked Johannes.

"To be sure! I have him a few centuries farther on, composing sonnets," said the Wicked One. "This is a very large place although you might not think so. I can show you only a small part of it."

Then they came to a division called "Sciences," and the Devil said:

"Look! That concerns you, Wisdom-Seeker!"

And he had Johannes look through the crack of the door, into a little room brightly lighted, cram-full of books. Professor Bommeldoos was there, standing on his head.

"Pluizer taught him that," said the Devil. "And do you see that clever contrivance he has made of mirrors and copper tubes? That is to look into his own brains with. He thinks to become still wiser."

The professor was utterly absorbed in his intricate apparatus, and gazed and gazed, with all his might, into an odd sort of twisted tubing, the end of which was attached to the back part of his head.

Johannes heard a low rushing and roaring, as if made by a gust of wind.

"Silence!" cried the Devil, testily.

But the roaring sound continued and grew louder.

"What is that?" asked Johannes.

"That is Death," said the Devil, spitefully. "He is called an ally of mine, but he often muddles up my affairs here, and he steals by the thousand the choicest specimens in my collection — especially the crack-brained."

"Here they are all crack-brained," said Johannes.

"Yes; but those you in the awake-life call that, he snatches away from me. Here we come to the division, "Happiness." This is the richest man in the world. Would you like a magnifying glass?"

The pen wherein sat the richest man in the world was all of gold, but so small that Johannes could not possibly enter it. The richest man in the world had a large head, quite bare and bald, above a very small insignificant body. He moved slowly back and forth, like a caterpillar incasing himself; and out of his little lips there drove golden threads with which he made a cocoon of himself.

"Poor fellow!" said Johannes, shuddering.

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" returned the Devil. "Here they are all happy. They know no better. I never torment

as does the Other with his Love eternal. I have also here the classification 'War.' You would naturally think that these must be unhappy. But quite the contrary. In general, I am an enemy of war. I prefer peace, as you will presently see. But this is a pleasant 'War.' In fact, the people enjoy it. For that reason it belongs here."

And now they came to a long row of very small pens in which was just such a bustle as one hears at night in a chicken-coop when the fowls are going to sleep. Over each little pen was: "*Religious War*," "*Party Strife*," "*Class Strife*," and as Johannes looked in through a small window, he saw a solitary little fellow, much excited and red in the face, who stood skirmishing in front of a mirror. The reflection of his own figure was so queer that it looked like someone's else.

In the third pen Johannes saw Dr. Felbeck. With furious fists, the little fellow rushed up to the mirror again and again, and stamped and scolded and raved until the foam flew from his mouth.

Then they came to a very long and diminishing little room that bore the words Love and Peace.

"There!" said the Devil. "Now we can talk aloud. They are not easily wakened here. Snug and cozy, is it not? A section of it also is *Pure Living*, and *Piety*, and *Benevolence*."

In the little ward stood many tiny beds, as in a hospital; and Johannes saw Labbekak and Goedzak in slovenly felt slippers, shuffling back and forth, distributing cups of warm tea and spoonfuls of a syrupy mixture. The beings in the little beds licked off the spoons, and fell asleep again.

Outside, the demons yelled and screeched still louder, and the downward motion was so apparent that Johannes grew dizzy.

"Here, also," said the Devil, "Death does me much harm."

Johannes looked at him. He now appeared wholly different. His brown suit had disappeared, and his smooth supple body — as shiny as a snakeskin — was as iridescent as water

stirred by dripping tar. His face, too, was far less affable. Hollow and grinning, it began to look like a death's head.

"You are the real Death!" exclaimed Johannes. "The other is a good friend of mine. I have no more fear of him."

The Devil laughed and reached out his hand toward Johannes' little flower. But Johannes caught it up close to his breast. The flower hung limp and seemed to be perishing. The little mirror shook like a leaf in his hand, so that he could scarcely hold it.

"Wistik!" he cried.

He listened, but could hear nothing. And now he seemed to be falling with whizzing speed. Johannes was greatly alarmed. The long ward with its rows of little beds grew ever longer, ever narrower.

"Wistik! Marjon! Let me out! Let me out! Set me free!"

"I have also a classification 'Freedom'," remarked the Devil, pointing out a mannikin who, busy with a long ribbon inscribed with the words "*Freedom and Justice*," kept winding it around his head, arms, and legs until he could not move a muscle.

"No!" cried Johannes, banging with both hands — in which were still clutched his flower and mirror — at a hard, spotted door. This door was marked "*Sin and Crime*."

"Look out!" said the Devil. "Do you not see what it says over it?"

"I do not care what it says!" cried Johannes, pounding away.

"Take care! For God's sake, take care!" shouted Bangeling.

"Help! Wistik! Marjon! Markus! help!" cried Johannes, crashing through the door.

Before him he saw a black and bottomless night; but it was more spacious, and he felt his distress diminishing.

And now he saw the imps all racing after him, and they

were playing with something. It glittered as they threw it, one to another, and they tugged and pulled and spit on it, and did things still worse — such as only very vile and impudent beings could do.

It was a book, and Johannes saw his name upon it — his own and his family name. Johannes was called the “Traveler” of his family.

At last one of the imps caught hold of it by a leaf, and flung it high up in air to tear it to pieces. The leaves fluttered and glittered, but held together. And the book, ceasing to fall, went higher and higher up into the dark night until it seemed in the far distance to be a little star.

Johannes kept looking at it with all his might, and it seemed to him as if he were a light bit of wood, or a bubble, rising swifter and swifter to the surface — from out the awful depths of the sea. Then, slowly, the heavens grew blue and bright.

At last he was drifting in the full light of day. His eyes were still closed, but he felt that he had returned to his *day* body, and he rested — still a little longer — in the light, motionless, blissful slumber of a convalescent, or of one come home again after a long and weary journey.

XII

"SHALL we go to the beach this morning?" asked Countess Dolores after breakfast. "It will be fresh and cool there now."

It was a merry morning trip. Both of the little girls went with them, and Johannes carried a small folding chair, and his friend's book. The countess took a seat in a beach-chair, and Johannes sat at her feet and read aloud to her, while the two children — their skirts tucked up, and their little feet and legs bare and pink in the clear light — busied themselves in the water and sand, with their pails and shovels.

Everything was flooded with sunshine, and clearly, beautifully tinted: — the knotted blonde tresses of the little girls — beneath their broad-brimmed white beach-hats — against the delicate blue of the horizon; the still deeper blue of the sea wherein could be seen the bright figures of the bathers in their red and blue bathing-dresses; and right and left the pure white sand, and the snowy foam.

Johannes had indeed become quite accustomed to what had so pained him at first — the profanation of the sea by human beings — so they were happy hours.

He resolved this morning to resume his inquiries after Markus, as soon as he was at liberty to do so.

They had not been sitting long on the beach when Van Lieverlee came sauntering up, arrayed in white flannel. He was without a waistcoat, but wore a lilac shirt, and a wide, black-silk girdle, and had on a straw hat.

He gave the countess a graceful cordial greeting, and immediately said to Johannes, this time without irony:

"I sent to my uncle, this morning, for information. Your friend is not there now. He received his discharge last Saturday on account of his disorderly conduct."

"What had he done?" asked Johannes.

"He had delivered an address at the exchange when, mark you, he had gone there on a matter of business. Now," said Van Lieverlee, looking at the countess with a smile, "it is quite obvious that a man of affairs could not retain such a clerk as that. It takes my uncle Van Trigt, who is so jealous of his good name, to deal with such cases."

"Yes, I understand," said Dolores.

"It depends, though, upon what he said," ventured Johannes.

"No! One talks about business at the exchange — not about reason and morality. There is a time and a place for everything. My uncle was well satisfied with him in all else. He had taken him for a rather well-bred person, he said. But the man has a remarkable propensity for discoursing in public places."

"Where is he now?"

"Where is any idler who has received his discharge? Off looking for an easy berth, I should say."

"Is your friend so very poor?" asked the countess, in a serious whisper, as one would speak over the shame of a kinsman.

"Of course," replied Johannes, with a positiveness that was a challenge. "Indeed, he would be ashamed not to be poor."

"I think such men insufferable!" exclaimed Van Lieverlee. "As Socrates said, their conceit can be seen through the holes in their clothes. Without even opening their mouths they — every one of them — seem to be forever preaching morals and finding fault. I hate the tribe. They are of all men the most turbulent and dangerous."

Johannes had never yet seen Van Lieverlee so angry, but he remained cool throughout the tirade, and kept his temper.

The countess said in a languid voice:

"He certainly is very immoderate. I cannot say, either, that such pronounced types are to my taste."

Johannes was silent, and the other two talked together a while longer. The children came up nearer, and lying down

in the clean, clear sand, they listened to the conversation. It was a bright group, for they were all dressed in white, except Johannes.

At last Van Lieverlee rose to go, and the countess, clinging to his hand, with a certain warmth of manner said:

"Of course you are coming to dinner?"

"Most assuredly!" replied Van Lieverlee.

After he had gone, there were several moments of constrained silence — a sort of suspense so obvious that even the children did not resume their chatter as usual, but continued silently playing with the sand, as if waiting for something to be said.

Johannes also began to comprehend that something was pending, but he had no idea of what it could be.

At last the lady said, rather hesitatingly, while tracing all kinds of curious figures in the sand, with her parasol:

"Have you not observed anything, Johannes?"

"Observed anything? I? No, Mevrouw," replied Johannes, with some discomposure. He surely had observed nothing.

"I have!" said Olga, decidedly, without looking up.

"I, too!" lisped Frieda after her.

"Hear the little smarties!" said Mevrouw, laughing in confusion, and blushing. "Well, what have you observed?"

"A new papa!" replied Olga.

"A new papa!" repeated Frieda.

Johannes looked up in some surprise and perplexity, into the beautiful, laughing eyes, and exquisite, blushing face of his friend.

Her laugh was a confirmation; and accompanying her question with a shake of the head, she continued:

"Really, do you not understand yet?"

"No," replied Johannes, in all seriousness. "Who is the new papa?"

"There he goes," said Olga, pointing with her little white finger after Van Lieverlee. And Frieda, too, stretched out her little hand in his direction.

"Fie, children! Do not point," said Mevrouw.

And Johannes began to comprehend — much as one does who has fallen out of a window, or has been struck on the head with a stone. As in the latter case, his first thought was astonishment at the cause of the blow, and that he could possibly survive it.

The blue air, the sea, the sand, the series of light-green dunes, the houses, the white figures — everything reeled and whirled, and then grew altogether black. He could not think, but only felt that he was extremely uncomfortable and qualmish. He was obliged to go.

As he stood up, he heard the words: "How pale you are!" That was the last. Then he walked away, beside the sea, hearing nothing save the washing of the waves upon the sand and the rushing of the blood in his ears.

He staggered a little back and forth, as if he had been drinking too much, and he wondered how that could be.

At last he could no longer see the people or houses — only water, sky, and sand.

It seemed to have been his intention; for, weak and limp, he went and lay down in the loose sand, and fell into a drowse.

XIII

SUCH drowsing is not real sleep, neither does it refresh. When Johannes awoke after a quarter of an hour, his throat was parched, and he felt as if his heart were shriveled in his breast. He essayed to think over what had happened, but it was too bitter and too frightful. He looked at the imprinted sand where he had been lying, as if he would go to sleep again. But now he could not sleep, and must stay awake.

He sat up and stared at the sea, and then again at the dunes. What was it that had befallen him? A very long time — he knew not himself how long — he sat looking. Then he stood up, feeling stiff and sluggish, as if dead tired from a long journey. Slowly and aimlessly he dragged himself into the dunes, and tried to take an interest in the beetles and the flowers. Sometimes, from force of habit, he succeeded; but immediately there returned the shudderings which that cruel blow had caused.

It had never entered his head that he himself would marry his friend. Why, then, should it go to his heart as if he were flung aside and trampled upon, now that another was about to take the place of her husband?

"It must not — *must* not be!" was all he could say. He very well knew that the world did not always concern itself with his thoughts, and that his day-life was conducted quite differently from his night-life where everything proceeded from his will and wish. But this was so squarely against his desires and ideas that it seemed to him as if the world *must* care about it.

Naturally, the world continued not to mind anything about it, because the world is a far greater and stronger thought than that of Little Johannes.

And if he had been sensible he would have modestly admitted it, because it is true. Then, at the most, that truth would only have saddened him.

But he was not yet very wise, and he did not wish to admit that his mind and thought were still weak and small compared with the great world-thought. And therefore he was not only sad, but angry as well.

Do not judge him too harshly, for he was still more boy than man. And how few *men* even there are with such clear good sense that they impute the variance solely to their own weakness and stupidity, and do not become dismayed and embittered when the world differs from them.

Johannes, then, was angry — furiously angry. That surely was not sensible, but yet it proved that he had more stamina than had Labbekak and Goedzak.

And all his anger was directed against that person who had thrust him aside from the place which he had so long, without being aware of it, considered his own. He thought Van Lieverlee not only a tiresome fool, but also an odious, abominable monster that ought to be exterminated.

And as his fancy pictured other figures, and he thought of that other hated being, Marjon's sister, and then again of Van Lieverlee, and his dear, beautiful, winsome friend, he found himself closely and frightfully besieged by insupportable thoughts — as if in a fire-begirt city, all aglow and scorching, with ever narrowing streets.

It was impossible to cry. At other times, as you surely must have observed, his tears came quickly enough. But now his eyes seemed to have been cauterized. Eyes, heart, brains, and ideas — all were equally hot and dry, and strained and distressed.

He went home at night with no idea of the hour. He had eaten nothing, but felt neither hunger nor thirst. Where he had been for so long, he was unable to tell. He went to his room and began trifling with his knickknacks — his souvenirs, books, and little treasures — for he was a collector.

His hostess came to rap at his door and to ask what was the matter — where he had been, and why he had been absent from his afternoon lessons. But Johannes did not invite her

in, and said that he wished to be alone. And she, half surmising the truth, and distressed about it, did not insist.

Then, among his treasures, Johannes found a pair of compasses — a large pair, one arm of which could be loosened for the attachment of a tracing-pen. And that single, loosened compass-arm was a shining, three-cornered bit of steel, about a finger long, and as sharp as a lancet.

With some wood and leather he contrived a handle for that bit of steel, and then he had a dagger — a real, wicked, dangerous dagger.

Apparently he did this merely to pass away the time, but after it was finished he began to think what could be done with it. Then what he *wished* to do with it. And at last *how* he should do it, *if*, indeed, he was to do it.

Thus, he was already a good bit on in an ugly way.

The octopus that he had defied so bravely had laid for him a trap of which he was not aware; for it has many more than eight arms, and there are many more demons than those whose acquaintance Johannes had already made.

He was going to step up to Van Lieverlee and say to him, "You or I." And if Van Lieverlee should then laugh at him, as he most likely would, he would stab him to death.

Such thoughts as that actually took possession of Little Johannes' head; for, I have told you, indeed, that Love is nothing to be ridiculed. Fortunately, a wide gulf yawns between thought and deed, otherwise there would be a great many more accidents upon this earth.

It was already past midnight, and he still sat pottering and burnishing and sharpening, when he heard again the creaking of the stair, that he now instantly recognized, and Marjon's step at the door.

She opened the door, and Johannes looked into her distended, anguished eyes. Her blonde hair fell straight and free over her shoulders, and her long white night-dress reached down to her bare feet.

"What are you doing, Jo?" she asked. "You make me

so anxious! What has happened? Where have you been the whole long day? Why do you eat nothing? And why are you still sitting up, with a light, till after midnight?"

Startled and distressed, Johannes made no reply. The dagger was still in his hand. He tried to hide it, without being observed, under his handkerchief. But Marjon saw it, and asked excitedly:

"What is that?"

"Nothing," said Johannes, in shame and confusion, like a detected child.

Marjon snatched away the handkerchief, and looked from the shining little object to Johannes with an expression of mingled pain and fright.

In silence they looked into each other's eyes a long time — Marjon with a searching, beseeching gaze, until Johannes lowered his lids and let his head droop.

"Who is it for?" she whispered. "Yourself?"

Without speaking or looking up, Johannes shook his head. Marjon sighed deeply, as if relieved.

"For whom, then?" again she asked. "For . . . him?"

Johannes nodded. Then she said:

"Poor Jol!"

That sounded strangely to him, for when irritated one is not apt to be compassionate toward others nor toward one's self. He thought, rather, to find abhorrence of his blood-thirsty plan. But she said it so sincerely and fervently that he began to weaken, although not to the point of crying.

"You will not do it, will you? It would not help at all. And you would . . . you would make me so frightfully unhappy."

"I cannot endure it, Marjon — I *cannot* endure it!"

Marjon kneeled down by the table, and rested her chin in her hands. Her clear, true eyes were now looking steadily at Johannes, and as she spoke they grew more tranquil. Johannes continued to look at her with the irresolute expression of one in despair who yet hoped for deliverance.

"Poor Jo!" repeated Marjon. And then, slowly, with frequent pauses, she said: "Do you know why I can speak so? . . . I know exactly how you feel. I have felt that way, too. I did not think that this would be the way of it — the way it now is. I only thought, 'She is going to have him, not I.' And then I too said, 'It cannot — *cannot* be!' But yet it might have been. And now *you* say, 'It cannot be.' But it can, just the same."

Here she waited a while, and Johannes looked at her more attentively, and with less irresolution.

"And now listen, Jo. You want to stab that prig, don't you? And you well know that I never had any liking for him. But now let me tell you that I myself, for days and for weeks, have wanted to do the same thing."

"What!" exclaimed Johannes, in astonishment.

Marjon hid her face and said: "It is the truth, Jo. Not him, of course, but . . . but her."

"You do not mean it, Marjon," said Johannes, indignantly.

"I am in earnest, Jo. I am not even sure whether I came into her service for that very reason, or for a better one."

"My God! How frightful!" exclaimed Johannes, deeply moved.

"There you are — alarmed and probably angry. Naturally you think her lovely, and are fond of her. And I am ashamed of myself — heartily ashamed."

Again they were silent, and in both those young heads were many turbulent thoughts.

"And do you know what helped me most to give it up? Not fear of punishment, nor of judgment, for I dreaded nothing so much as, worst of all, that she might succeed in getting you. But it helped me when I thought how much you loved her, and how you would cry and suffer if you should see her lying dead."

Again they looked at each other, steadily and frankly, and their eyes were dimmed with tears. Then said Marjon:

"And now, Jo, think of this. I care nothing about that

man, nor do you; and doubtless he would not be a great loss. But to her he would be, and indeed if you should kill him, you would bring it about that she would see him dead, and would have to cry. Do you wish to do that?"

Johannes' eyes opened wide, and he looked into the lamp-light.

"Yes," said he, deliberately. "He deceives her and she deceives herself. He is altogether different from what she fancies."

Then Marjon, taking both hands from the table, and resting them upon Johannes' arm, said with rising voice:

"But Jo, Jo — indeed everything is different from what we think! Who can see just how and what people and things are? I thought that woman hateful, and you thought her lovely. You think that fellow odious, while she thinks him charming. Really, only the Father, knows how things are. Believe me, the Father only. We are poor, poor creatures. We know nothing — nothing."

Then, resting her head, with its fair, fine hair, upon his arm, she sobbed bitterly; and Johannes, now completely broken down and mollified, wept with her.

Then they heard a door open in the hall. Probably, in their agitation, they had been talking too loudly.

Marjon took flight. In a moment of less excitement she would have been too shrewd for that. Johannes did indeed quickly put out the light, but he saw, through the crack of the door, that some one with a candle was standing in the hall. There was a meeting, and Johannes overheard a brief exchange of angry words, in vehement, suppressed tones.

The last he understood was: "To-morrow morning you leave."

XIV

ABOUT the time all this was taking place, something else occurred which most of you will readily recall. It happened at the time the King and Queen were married.

That was a time of many processions, when arches of honor were erected in all the squares, and when there arose, everywhere, the peculiar odor of spruce-boughs and of burning illuminants.

And the life of the King and Queen was far different from that of Little Johannes. They had to be decked often with beautiful clothes, and then as often to be undressed, to parade, to sit in state, to listen to wearisome harangues, to live through long dinners, and to be forever bowing and smiling. Such was their life.

To Johannes all this excitement and these joyful festivities seemed but a motley background against which his own sombre trouble was all the more sharply in relief. Although everybody was concerned about the King and Queen, and no one at all about Little Johannes, he yet found himself and his own sorrow none the less important.

You are aware that these festivities lasted for several weeks, and took place in every town in the land. In the evening of the day about which I last told you, there was a great display of fireworks on the beach, and Johannes, with the entire household, went to see it.

And there, in the midst of all that crowding and shouting, he had, for the first time, a chance to speak with the beloved friend who had caused him so much suffering. Marjon he had not seen, and he knew not if she was gone; but the countess seemed as friendly and as cheerful as ever, and she had not questioned him.

On the terrace from which they watched the golden columns rush skyward with a hiss, and the "pin-wheels" sizzle and

fizz, accompanied by the "a-a-a-ahs!" of admiration from the dark, moving mass of people — there, he ventured in an undertone to speak to her.

"What did you really think of me yesterday, Mevrouw?"

"Well," replied the countess, rather coldly, continuing to look at the fireworks, "you have not come up to my expectations, Johannes."

"What do you mean? Why not?" asked Johannes, sick at heart.

"Oh, you know very well. I was aware that you had plain connections, and were not descended from a distinguished family; but I hoped to make that good, in some degree, through my own influence. Yet I had not thought you so ordinary as that."

"But what do you mean?"

The lady cast a disdainful glance upon him.

"Would you care to hear it spoken, word for word? Liaisons, then — with inferiors. And at your age, too. How could you?"

In a flash Johannes comprehended.

"Oh, Mevrouw — but you mistake — completely. I am not in the least enamored of that girl, but formerly she was my little comrade, and she thinks a great deal of me. She saw that I was unhappy yesterday, and then she came to sympathize with me."

"Sympathize?" asked the countess, hesitatingly, and not without irony, of which Johannes, however, was unconscious.

"Yes, Mevrouw. But for her, I should have done desperate things. She prevented me. She is a brave girl."

Then he told her still more of Marjon.

Countess Dolores believed him, and became more friendly. In that caressing voice which had caused Johannes so much unhappiness, and which even now completely fascinated him, she asked:

"And why were you so desperate, my boy?"

"Do you not understand? It was because of what you told me yesterday."

She understood well enough, and Johannes thought it charming in her to be willing to listen so kindly. But although she felt flattered she pretended not to know what he meant — as if such an idea were unthinkable.

"But how can that make you feel so desperate, my boy? I have not said, however, that you must leave my house on account of it."

"If that should take place, Mevrouw, do you fancy that I could remain with you? Did you think I could endure that? But it is not going to be, is it? It was only a jest. Tell me that it was! You were only teasing me! Tell me that you were only teasing me!"

It was all too clear now, and she could dissemble no longer. Half in kindness, half in compassion, she said:

"But, my boy, my boy, what has got into your head?"

Johannes rested his hand on her arm, and asked, imploringly:

"You were not in earnest, were you?"

But she freed her arm gently, saying:

"Yes, Johannes, I was in earnest."

And now he knew that he was hoping against hope.

"Is there no hope for me?"

The countess smilingly shook her head.

"No, dear boy, not the least. Put the thought quite away from you."

The last of the rockets rushed up with a startling hiss, to burst in the black sky with a soft puff, and expire in a shower of brilliant sparks. Then it was all over. The band played "Wilhelmus of Nassau," and the dark throng surged and pressed more vehemently, while on all sides the street-boys whistled shrilly and shouted to one another: "J-a-a-a-n!" and "Gerrèt!"

Johannes, stunned by renewed pain, passed on through the cheering like one deafened and stupefied.

His hostess, now full of sympathy, said:

"Do you remember, Johannes, what we promised Father Canisius? He was to teach you who Jesus is, was he not? Will you go to church with me to-morrow? That will best console you."

A wicked thought passed through Johannes' head. He wished to ask a question, but he could not utter the hated name.

"Is any one else going?"

"Yes, the man to whom I am engaged. He also is now convinced that peace is only to be found in the Holy Church. He is Catholic, as are myself and my children."

Johannes said not another word that evening; but he slept more peacefully than the night before.

XV

THE church was full when Johannes, with the entire family, entered it. He and the others were in their best attire, and Van Lieverlee had on a very long black coat and a high hat. As he passed in he removed his hat respectfully, and his white face, now smoothly shaven, wore a serious, even stern, expression.

It was cool and dark and solemn in the building. The rays of the sun, in passing through the window-glass, were tinged with yellow and blue, and cast queer fleckings over the faces and forms of those who stood waiting or were securing seats. The fragrance of incense floated about the altar, and the organ was playing. It was not really an old church, but, with its paintings and floral adornments, was beautiful enough to move Johannes to tenderness; for he felt so sad and disheartened, listening to the solemn music in that richly-colored twilight, that he had to make an effort to keep from sobbing.

Father Canisius, smiling kindly, and with priestly seriousness in face and tread, although not yet in his robes, stopped on his way to the sacristy to speak with them. Johannes could feel his sharp, penetrating look through the thick glasses of his spectacles.

"You see, Father," said the countess, "we have come to seek Jesus. Johannes, also."

"He is waiting for you," replied the priest, solemnly, pointing out the great crucifix above the altar. Then he disappeared in the sacristy.

Johannes immediately fastened his eyes upon that figure, and continued to contemplate it while the people were taking their places.

It hung in the strongest light of the shadowy church. Apparently it was of wood stained a pale rose, with peculiar blue and brown shadows. The wounds in the side and under the

thorns on the forehead were distinct to exaggeration — all purple and swollen, with great streaks of blood like dark-red sealing-wax. The face, with its closed eyes, wore a look of distress, and a large circle of gold and precious stones waggishly adorned the usual russet-colored, cork-screwy, woodeny locks. The cross itself was of shining gold, and each of its four extremities was ornamented, while a nice, wavy paper above the head bore the letters I. N. R. I. One could see that it was all brand-new, and freshly gilded and painted. Wreaths and bouquets of paper flowers embellished the altar.

For a long time — perhaps a quarter of an hour — Johannes continued to look at the image. "That is Jesus," he muttered to himself, "He of whom I have so often heard. Now I am going to learn about Him, and He is to comfort me. He it is who has redeemed the world."

And however often he might repeat this, trying seriously to convince himself — because he would have been glad to be convinced and also to be redeemed — he could nevertheless see nothing except a repulsive, ugly, bloody, prinked-up wooden doll. And this made him feel doubly sorrowful and disheartened. Fully fifteen minutes had he sat there, looking and musing, hearing the people around him chatting — about the price they had paid for their places, about the keeping on or taking off of women's hats, and about the reserved seats for the first families. Then the door of the sacristy opened, and the choir-boys with their swinging censers, and the sacristan, and the priests in their beautiful, gold-bordered garments, came slowly and majestically in. And as the congregation kneeled, Johannes kneeled with them.

And when Johannes, as well as all the others, looked at the incoming procession, and then again turned his eyes to the high altar, behold! there, to his amazement, kneeling before the white altar, he saw a dark form. It was in plain sight, bending forward in the twilight, the arms upon the altar, and the face hidden in the arms. A man it was, in the customary dark clothes of a laborer. No one — neither Johannes nor

probably any one else in the church — had seen whence he came. But he was now in the full sight of all, and one could hear whisperings and a subdued excitement run along the rows of people and pass on to the rear, like a gust of wind over a grain-field.

As soon as the procession of choir-boys and priests came within sight of the altar, the sacristan stepped hastily out of line and went forward to the stranger, to assure him that, possibly from too deep absorption in devotion, or from lack of familiarity with ecclesiastical ceremony, he was guilty of intrusion.

He touched the man's shoulder, but the man did not stir. In the breathless stillness that followed, while every one expectantly awaited the outcome, a deep, heart-rending sob was heard.

"A penitent!" "A drunken man!" "A convert!" were some of the whispered comments of the people.

The perplexed sacristan turned round, and beckoned Father Canisius, who, with impressive bearing, stepped up in his white, gold-threaded garb, as imposingly as a full-sailed frigate moves.

"Your place is not here," said the priest, in his deep voice. He spoke kindly, and not particularly loudly. "Go to the back of the church."

There was no reply, and the man did not move; yet, in the still more profound silence, his weeping was so audible that many people shuddered.

"Do you not hear me?" said the priest, raising his voice a little, and speaking with some impatience. "It is well that you are repentant, but only the consecrated belong here — not penitents."

So saying, he grasped the shoulder of the stranger with his large, strong hand.

Then, slowly, very slowly, the kneeling man raised his head from his arms, and turned his face toward the priest.

What followed, perhaps each one of the hundreds of wit-

nesses would tell differently; and of those who heard about it later, each had a different idea. But I am going to tell you what Johannes saw and heard — heard quite as clearly as you have seen and heard the members of your own household, to-day.

He saw his Brother's face, pale and illumined, as if his head were shone upon by beams of clearest sunlight. And the sadness of that face was so deep and unutterable, so bitter and yet so gentle, that Johannes felt forced, through pain, to press both hands upon his heart, and to set his teeth, while he gazed with wide, tear-filled eyes, forgetting everything save that shining face so full of grief.

For a time it was as still as death, while man and priest regarded each other. At last the man spoke, and said:

"Who are you, and in whose name are you here?"

When two men stand thus, face to face, and address each other with all earnestness in the hearing of many others, one of them is always immediately recognized to be the superior — even if the listeners are unable to gauge the force of the argument. Every one feels that superiority, although later many forget or deny it. If that dominance is not very great, it arouses spitefulness and fury; but if it is indeed great, it brings, betimes, repose and submissiveness.

In this case the ascendancy was so great that the priest lost even the air of authority and assurance with which he had come forward, and did that for which, later, he reproached himself — he stopped to explain:

"I am a consecrated priest of the Triune God, and I speak in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — our Saviour and Redeemer."

There ensued a long silence, and Johannes saw nothing but the shining, human face and the eyes, which, full of sorrow and compassion, continued to regard the richly robed priest with a bitter smile. The priest stood motionless, with hanging hands and staring eyes, as if uncertain what next to say or do; but he listened silently for what was coming, as did

Johannes and all the others in the church — as if under an overpowering spell.

Then came the following words, and so long as they sounded no one could think of anything else — neither of the humble garb of him who spoke, nor of the incomprehensible subjection of his gorgeously arrayed listener:

“But you are not yet a man! Would you be a priest of the Most High?”

“You are not yet redeemed, nor are these others with you redeemed, although you make bold to say so in the name of the Redeemer.

“Did your Saviour when upon earth wear cloth of silver and of gold?”

“There is no redemption yet — neither for you nor for any of yours. The time is not come for the wearing of garments of gold.

“Mock not, nor slander. Your ostentation is a travesty of the Most High, and a defamation of your Saviour.

“Do you esteem the kingdom of God a trifle, that you array yourself and rejoice, while the world still lies in despair and in shackles?”

“So plays a little girl with a doll, and calls herself a mother. She tosses and pets and prinks her little one, but it is all wood and paint and bran. And the real mother smiles — she who knows the anguish and the gladness.

“But you abandon the naked, living child for the bedizened doll. And the mother sheds tears of blood.

“Like peacocks, you strut through your marble churches, glittering in tinsel; but you let the kingdom of God lie like an uncleansed babe upon unclean linen — naked and languishing.

“And the Devil delights in your churches, your masses, and prayers and psalms — your treasure and fine linen; for the child lies naked at your back door, with the dogs, and it wails for its mother.

“Weep — as do I! Weep bitter tears — for that child is

two thousand years old. And still it lies, unwashed and uncherished.

"Why do you vaunt your consecration, and prate of your Redeemer? Your Holy One still toils beneath His grievous cross, yet all your splendid churches have you built upon that heavy cross.

"You bear the mitre of Persians, and Egyptians, and the tabard of the Jews. And you also make use of the scourge wherewith the Jews did scourge Him.

"They bound and spat upon — they scourged and crucified and speared Him; but for two thousand years you have been roasting Him before a slow fire — before the fire of your lies and misrepresentations; of your treachery and arrogance; of your cruelties and perversions; of your pomp and oblations; of your transgressions, and of your attacks upon and strivings against the God who is Truth.

"You are commanded to serve your Father in spirit and in truth, and you have served Him with the letter and with lies.

"His prophets, who loved the truth better than their lives, you have burned at the stake, and have made them martyrs.

"Yet you have bent your proud neck to the world which you affect to despise. In the name of the Father you have burned and imprisoned sages; but at last you were forced to eat the bread of their wisdom, for the knife of the scornful was at your throat.

"The world you have disdained and denounced is wiser than you — more beautiful and even more holy.

"Black as the raven — black as the beetles, the moles, the creatures that live in the slime — black and vile, you burrow your secret way through the clear, bright world. But in your churches you enthrone yourselves and parade like kings — in violet and yellow and purple, and gold brocade.

"You were not commanded to found a kingdom solely for yourselves — a kingdom of the sacred and the elect in a world of the unholy and immature.

"You were commanded to spread abroad the kingdom of

God over the whole earth — over all that weep and are oppressed.

“You were not commanded to despise the world and to forsake it, but you were commanded to hallow the world.

“You rend the world in twain, speaking of the sanctified and the unsanctified. Your Saviour lived among thieves, and died between murderers, nevertheless he promised them Paradise.

“Not until every man is sanctified, until every day is a holy day, and every house a House of God — not until then may you speak of redemption, and array yourself in white and gold.

“Woe unto you, forsakers of the world! Was not the world bestowed upon you by the Father as the noblest and most precious gift of the dearest of friends?

“How dare you despise it?

“Will you openly preserve the penny of your enemy, and reject the noblest gift of the Most High?

“Do you speak in the name of the Triune God? But you have smitten the Father’s face — you have martyred the Son, and the Holy Ghost have you violated.

“You have been told that God is Truth. Yet you have striven against the truth with torture-tongs, with dungeons, and with burnings at the stake.

“You have made the Son of man an object of ridicule — a shield for lying and violence, a pretext for strife and bloodshed, a monstrous idol.

“And of all sins, the worst is the sin against the Holy Ghost — which is the bread that you eat, and the water wherein you swim.

“You shackle and restrain the Spirit. This is of all sins the worst, and this you know.

“Where God alone may reign — in the free human heart — there you establish yourselves with your laws and dogmas, your writings and your imageries.

“Think you, madman, that the wisdom of the Eternal

can be comprised within the limits of written or printed pages?

"To Him your sacred books are as cobwebs and sweepings; for He lives and moves eternally, and book nor brain can compass Him. Like to flowing water, you are told, is the wisdom of God. Forever changing, forever the same, no finite word can picture His progressive wisdom.

"There is more of the Father's wisdom in the shy, faltering whisper of a poor heathen child, than in all your bulls and councils and decretals.

"Would you put a tube to the lips of the Father, that He may speak at your pleasure? Yet will He speak as seems best to Himself.

"Would you point with the finger and say to Him: 'Here! These shall speak in thy name, and to these shalt thou give wisdom, and these shalt thou inspire with understanding, and these shalt thou save, and these condemn!'

"But He will reply: 'There!' and will regard your pointings even as the lava of a volcano regards the guide-posts and little crosses on the slopes.

"But your opinions and your pride are avenged, for the world commands you as the hunter his hound, as the showman his monkey. You pull the carriage of prince and monied man, and make grimaces before the powerful.

"They build you churches, and you say masses for them, although they be Satan himself.

"The world is sanctified without you, and you sanctify yourselves because of the world.

"That your Popes are not more dissolute, your prelates more prodigal, and your friars more slothful, is because the world has constrained you. But you have constrained the world to no purpose.

"You have set yourself against the usurer, but the world will practise usury, and you practise usury with the world. Thus are you the ape and the servant of the world.

"Where you have rivals, you show yourself discreet; but

where you are without competitors, there as ever you corrupt the land.

"You follow after the world, as a captive shark follows a sailing ship. You turn and twist, but the world points out the way — not you.

"Like a kettle tied by mischievous boys to the tail of a dog, so do you rattle with hollow menaces behind the course of the world. You scare, but do not guide.

"Yes, you strive against the sanctifying of the world, for with your hands you would conceal the godlike fire of knowledge; but the flame bursts through your fingers, and consumes you.

"What have you done for the sheep committed to your care — for the poor and bereaved — for the oppressed and the disinherited?

"Submission you have taught them — ay — submission to Mammon. You have taught them to bow meekly to Satan.

"God's light — the light of knowledge — you have withheld from them. Woe be to you!

"You have taught them to beg, and to kiss the rod that smote them. You have cloaked the shame of alms-receiving, and have prated of honor in servitude.

"Thus have you humbled man, and disfigured the human soul.

"With the fruit of their hands you have decorated your churches and adorned your unworthy bodies.

"You have aroused the devil in the heart — the devil of fear — fear of hell and everlasting punishment. The aspiration of the free heart toward God you have deadened; and with indulgences and the confessional have you lulled the waking conscience.

"Of the love of the Father you have made commerce — a sinful merchandise. Not because you love virtue do you preach it, but because of the sweet profit. You promise deliverance to all who follow your counsel; but as well can you make a present of moon and stars.

"Are you not told to recompense evil with good? And is God less than man that He should do otherwise?"

"It is well for you that He does not do otherwise, for where then were your salvation?"

"For you, and you only, are the brood of vipers against whom is kindled the wrath of Him who was gentle with adulterers and murderers."

While speaking, the man had risen to his full height, and he now appeared, to all there assembled, impressively tall.

When he had spoken, reaching his right hand backward he grasped the foot of the great golden crucifix. It snapped off like glass, and he threw it on the marble floor at the feet of the priest. The fragment broke into many bits. It was apparently not wood, but plaster.

"Sacrilege!" cried the priest, in a stifled voice, as if the sound were wrung from his throat. His eyes seemed to be starting out of his great purple face.

The man quietly replied:

"No, but my right; for you are the sacrilegist and the blasphemous who makes of the Son of man a hideous caricature."

Then the priest stepped forward, and gripped Markus by the wrist. The latter made no resistance, but cried in a loud voice that reverberated through the church:

"Do your work, Caiaphas!"

After that he suffered himself to be led away to the sacristy.

While the congregation still sat, spellbound and motionless, Johannes hastily writhed his way out between the benches and the throngs of people.

Father Canisius returned, now quite calm and far less red. And while the sacristan with broom and dust-pan swept up the fragments and put them into a basket, the priest turned toward the audience and said:

"Have sympathy with the poor maniac. We will pray for him."

After that, the service proceeded without further disturbance.

XVI

IN a dreary district of the city, at the end of a long, lonely street, stands a long, gloomy building. The windows — all of the same form — are of ground glass, and the house itself is lengthened by a high wall. What lies behind this wall the neighbors do not know; but sometimes strange noises are borne over it — loud singing, yelling, dismal laughter, and monotonous mutterings.

On the steps of this house, silent, and with earnest faces, stood Johannes and Marjon. The latter had on a simple, dark gown, and she carried Keesje on her arm.

The door was opened by a porter wearing a uniform-cap. The man gave them, especially the monkey, a critical, hesitating look.

"That will not do," said he, drily. "You must leave your little ones at home when you come here to make visits."

"Come," said Marjon, without a smile at his jest, "ask the superintendent. My brother is so fond of him, and I do not dare leave him at home."

They had to wait awhile in the vestibule. At first they said not a word, and Keesje was very still.

Then, scratching Keesje's head, Johannes quietly remarked, "He has grown thin."

"He has a cough," said Marjon.

At length the doorkeeper came back, with the superintendent. Johannes instantly recognized in the tall, spare gentleman, the slovenly black suit, the gold spectacles, and the bushy white hair, his old friend Dr. Cijfer.

"Whom have they come to see?" he asked.

"The new one who was brought in yesterday — working-class," said the doorkeeper.

"Violent?" asked the doctor.

"No, quiet, Doctor. But they want to take their monkey with them."

"Why so, young people?" asked Dr. Cijfer, frowning at the monkey over the top of his spectacles in a most objectionable manner, to the discomfiture of Keesje.

"Doctor Cijfer, have you forgotten me?" asked Johannes.

"Wait," said the doctor, giving him a sharp look, "are you the boy who assisted me some time ago, and then ran away? Your name, indeed, was Johannes, was it not?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Ah, yes," said the doctor, reflecting. "A rather queer boy, with some talent. And there is a brother of yours here? I always thought there were hereditary *moments* in your family. You were a queer boy."

"But it can't do any harm if our monkey goes with us, Doctor," said Marjon. "He is quite still and obedient."

Slowly shaking his head, the doctor made a prolonged "m-m-m" with his compressed lips, as if to say that he did not himself think it so hazardous.

"I have not yet seen the patient. We will ask the junior physician if he may receive callers. But only ten minutes — not longer, mind."

Dr. Cijfer vanished with the doorkeeper, and again the trio waited a considerable time.

Then the doorkeeper returned with a man-nurse in white jacket and apron. The latter led them down long halls, three times unlocking different doors and gratings with the key that he carried in his hand, until it seemed to Johannes as if they were pressing deeper and deeper into realms of error and constraint.

But it was still there — sadly still — not, as Johannes had expected it to be, noisy with ravings. Now and then a patient in a dark blue uniform came toward them, carrying a pail or a basket. He would look back at them suspiciously, and then go farther on, softly muttering.

At last they came to a dismal reception-room with a little

wooden table and four rush-seated chairs. It was lighted from above, and there was no outlook. There they were left by themselves in painful suspense.

After what again seemed to be a very long time a different door of the same little room was opened by another nurse; and then, at last, Little Johannes could rest again on the bosom of his beloved brother.

But even before Johannes could reach him, Keesje had sprung to his shoulder and received the first greeting.

"Hey, Markus, do you greet Kees before you do us?" said Marjon, laughing through her tears.

"Are you jealous?" asked Markus. "He has become such a good comrade of mine."

Drawing Keesje up to him, he sat down, while Johannes and Marjon kneeled, one on each side. The two young people regarded him a long while without saying anything; yet it did them good.

"Only ten minutes," sighed Johannes, "and I have so much to ask and to say."

"Do not be uneasy," said Markus. "I shall not be here long."

"Is it not frightful here?" asked Marjon.

"It is the most sorrowful place on earth. But it is without deceit; and I am happy here, for I can do much to comfort."

"But it is fearfully unjust to put you here, with crazy folks," said Marjon. "Those miserable creatures!" and she clenched her slender little hand.

"It is only a small part of the great wrong. They act according to their understanding."

"Markus," said Johannes, "I want to ask you this: I saw poor Heléne in the kingdom of the Evil One. Do you know whom I mean? You do? What does that signify? And will she be saved?"

"I know whom you mean, Johannes; but do not forget that we are all in the kingdom of the Evil One. Only in the heart of the Father are we free. The Father allows Waan to have

power over all who are away from Him — even over me.”

“But not for ever, Markus.”

“How can that which is evil avail for ever? The melancholy seem to be the chosen ones. The burden they bear is a precious one, but only if they realize that it is of the Father. Then it sanctifies; otherwise it crushes. Some learn this first through death, as did *Helène*.”

“Markus,” said Marjon then, “we both have had such wicked things in our heads. Shall we ever be forgiven them?”

“Tell me about them,” said Markus. “I know indeed, but yet tell me.”

“We have wanted to murder, out of jealousy — he and . . . and I.”

“That is the way with stags and buffaloes and cocks,” said Markus. “They kill one another on account of their love. The strongest survives, and feels not the least remorse. And he is forgiven.”

“But we are human, Markus,” said Johannes.

“That is fine, dear Johannes, that you should say it of yourself. And yet you have not murdered anybody, have you?”

“No, but I have wanted to.”

“Truly and with all your heart?”

“Not that way,” said Johannes.

“No, for in that case you would not now be asking forgiveness. Forgiveness is already there, because insight is forgiveness.”

The two disciples were silent, and looked at him thoughtfully through half-closed eyes. At last Marjon said:

“But then if we had done it we would have been forgiven all the sooner; for then we should have perceived the sooner that it was wrong.”

“You would then have experienced the desire for, and the satisfaction in, the deed, and have lost the fear of it. That would have been two more fetters for you, with the power to understand reduced.”

"But yet there are things which we have to do in order to know that they are wicked," said Johannes.

"Are there such things?" asked Markus. "Well, then, do them; but do not complain if the lesson is a hard one. There are children, also, who do not believe their parents when they tell them that fire will burn, and that burns are painful. And yet such children cry if they burn themselves."

"But why is it so intolerable to think that another will obtain that which we hold dear? Is that wicked?" asked Marjon.

"It is not wicked to long for love or power or honor, when those things are our due because of our being wise and good. But that which he covets comes not to the jealous one, nor power to him who thirsts for it, nor honor to the over-ambitious. The things longed for will not satisfy them. Nor are eating and drinking bad in themselves, but they are only for those who have need of them."

At that moment the door was unlocked. As it swung open the nurse said that the time was up, adding:

"Perhaps you may come again to-morrow."

"Will he have to stay here?" asked Marjon, as they were on their way down the long hall.

"Well," replied the nurse, "they may indeed shut up quite a lot more. He can deal with the violent ones better than the professor can. There was one here who gave us a lot of trouble, because he wouldn't eat. He'd thrown his plate at me head. Look here! What a cut! But your brother had him eating inside of ten minutes."

"Will he soon be free?" asked Johannes.

"They ought to make him a professor," was the reply. "I've heard they're to examine him to-morrow."

Little was said while Johannes was accompanying Marjon to the boarding-house in which she now lived. It was kept by one of Markus's friends, a workman in the iron foundry. The man was called Jan van Tijn, and was foreman of the

hammer-works. He earned sixteen guldens a week, and had nine children. His dwelling had three small rooms and a kitchen, and there twelve persons had to sleep — father, mother, nine children, and the boarder. But Juffrouw van Tijn was still young, with a fresh face and a pair of strong arms, and she made light of her work.

"If there are to be still more of us," said Jan, "we must begin to lie in a row — spoon-fashion."

Jan had a long blonde moustache and a pair of shrewd eyes, and his manner of speech was coarse — terribly so. Marjon slept in the little kitchen, and, as Jan's eldest girl was not yet sixteen, Marjon could be of great service in the family.

"Did you get him out?" asked Jan, who had come in his working-blouse to meet them. And when they shook their heads, he began cursing, tremendously.

"Well — ! Did ye ever see such scoundrels? I'd like to pitch into the loons! Can't that perfesser see that Markus knows more in his little finger than the whole scurvy lot of them — patients, doctors, perfessers, and all? And because he's given the priest a dressing-down, and broken an image worth a nickel, must he be shut up in a mad-house? Well — !!!"

Jan was furious, and proposed, with the aid of a sledge-hammer, to convince the learned gentlemen that they had made a blunder.

"He is to be examined to-morrow," said Johannes, thinking to calm him.

But Jan retorted scornfully, "Examined! Examined! I'll examine their own cocoanuts with a three-inch gimlet! If anything comes out but sawdust I hope to drop dead."

He said much more that I will not repeat.

Johannes stayed away from the Villa Dolores the entire day, for it was too dreary for him there. He would now far rather be in this poor household with its many children. He noticed how the young mother managed her uproarious little troop, how constantly and cheerfully busy she was the whole

day long — bearing, and getting the better of, difficulties which would have dismayed and discouraged many another.

Johannes ate with them, and although not very hungry, because of his anxiety, he enjoyed his food. And after they had had their late afternoon coffee, and the younger children had gone to bed — when Van Tijn had returned from his work, and with a certain solemn thoughtfulness had filled his pipe and was silently smoking it — then Johannes felt wonderfully at peace. He had not known such peace in a long time. Very little was said. Outside, the twilight was falling; indoors, the only light was from the little flame under the coffee-pot. The women, too, were tired, and sat listening to the sounds in the street. And Johannes knew that they were all thinking of the friend in the asylum.

That evening, when he was again in the handsome, luxurious villa, everything seemed strange and distasteful. In the brightly lighted drawing-room, chatting in a low tone, Van Lieverlee sat close beside the lady of the house, with an intolerable air of being the rightful lord of the manor. Johannes merely wanted to bid them good-night.

"Have you found your poor friend?" asked Van Lieverlee, in his most condescending manner.

"Yes, Mijnheer," replied Johannes. And then, after some hesitation: "Can anything be done to get him out promptly?"

"My dear boy," said Van Lieverlee, "it is not to be desired, either for his own sake or that of society. I am not a doctor, but that he belongs where he is I can see at once, as could any layman. What do you think, Dearest?"

Dolores nodded languidly, and said: "My heart was touched for the man — he has a fine face. And have you noticed, Walter, what a splendid baritone voice he has?"

"Yes," said Van Lieverlee; "it is a pity he is out of his head. What a good singer of Wagner he might be! An excellent Parsifal! Do you not think so, Dolores?"

"A splendid Parsifal! Perhaps he may get well yet," added the countess.

"Oh, no," said Van Lieverlee. "That sort of prophetic frenzy is incurable. I know indeed of so many cases."

For an instant Johannes stood hesitating. Should he give vent to what was boiling in his breast?

But he was older now, and he curbed himself. Before he went to sleep he resolved: "This is my last night here."

XVII

AGAIN they stood on the steps of the gloomy building — the three — Johannes, Marjon, and Keesje. It was a bleak day, and Keesje's thin little black face peeped out from under a thick shawl.

"Just go into the doctor's room, will you?" said the door-keeper. "The doctor wishes to speak with you. The professor is there, also," he added, importantly. And when Marjon would have gone with them, he extended his hand as if to stay her, saying, "Pardón, but the lady and the little one weren't invited."

Without replying, Marjon turned round to Johannes and said, "Then I'll wait for you at the house. Will you come soon?"

In the tiresome, pompous quarters of the doctor, with its bookcases draped in green, its white gypsum busts of Galenus, Hippocrates, and other old physicians, sat two dark-coated gentlemen. They were vis-à-vis, each in an office-chair, and deep in conversation.

On the large writing-table lay several open books, and some shining white metal instruments for measuring and examining.

"Sit down, my friend," said Professor Bommeldoos, in his loud voice and brusque manner. "We all know one another, do we not? We have already made an examination together."

Johannes silently took a seat.

"Let me explain to you, Johannes," said Dr. Cijfer, in more soft and moderate tones. "We — Professor Bommeldoos and I — have been charged by the judicial commission to make a medical investigation of the mental condition of your brother. He has committed a crime — not a heavy one, but yet not with-

out significance, and one for which he ought to have been placed under arrest. Yet the clergyman thought him irresponsible, and summoned a physician from the asylum. Your brother simply would not reply to the latter. He was stubbornly silent."

Johannes nodded. He knew it already.

"That was the reason for his being temporarily secluded here. Now I have seen the patient myself once, but I am sorry to have to say that I can get no further than the other physician. When I interrogate him he looks at me in a very peculiar way, and remains silent."

"I do not understand, Colleague," said Bommeldoos, "why you did not instantly diagnose this as a symptom of megalomania."

"But, worthy Colleague," replied Dr. Cijfer, "he does talk with the nurses and his fellow patients, and he is obliging and ready to help. They all wish him well — yes, they are even singularly fond of him."

"All of which comports very well with my diagnosis," said Bommeldoos.

"Does he often have those whims, Johannes," asked Dr. Cijfer, "when he will not speak?"

"He has no whims," said Johannes, stoutly.

"Why, then, will he not reply?"

"I think you would not answer me," returned Johannes, "if I were to ask you if you were mad."

The two learned men exchanged smiles.

"That is a somewhat different situation," said Bommeldoos, haughtily.

"He was not questioned in such a blunt manner as that," explained Doctor Cijfer. "I asked about his extraction, his age, the health of his father and mother, about his own youth, and so forth — the usual memory promptings. Will you not give us some further information concerning him? Remember, it is of real importance to your brother."

"Mijnheer," said Johannes, "I know as little as yourself

about all that. And even if I knew more I would not tell you what he himself thought best not to tell."

"Come, come, my boy," said the professor, "are you trying to make sport of us? Do you not know whence you came? Nothing of your parents, nor of your youth?"

Johannes hesitatingly considered whether or not he should do as Markus had done, and answer no questions whatever. But still he might reply to those that concerned only himself.

"I do, indeed, know all that about myself, but not about him," said he.

"Then you are not brothers?" asked the doctor.

"No, not in the sense you mean."

Dr. Cijfer looked at Bommeldoos as if to see what he thought of this reply. Then he touched a bell-button, saying:

"It seems to me, Colleague, that we might better see him face to face. We can then, perhaps, get on better than when apart."

Bommeldoos nodded solemnly, and passed his hand over his mighty forehead. A servant came in.

"Will you bring the patient Vis from the ward of the calm patients, working-class?"

"Very well, Doctor."

The servant vanished, and for several minutes afterward it was as still as death in the study. The two learned men stared at the carpet quite absorbed in thought — not minding delay — after the manner of deep thinkers. Johannes heard the clock ticking on the mantel, the faint music from an out-of-doors band playing a merry march, the sound of hurrahs, and the clatter of horses' hoofs on the cobblestone pavement. The royal wedding-festivities were still in progress, and Johannes could mentally see the two people who at that moment were bowing and waving as they sat in their carriage. There was a knock at the door. The nurse came and said, "Here is the patient." Then he let Markus in, remaining himself to look on.

"I will ring for you," said Dr. Cijfer, with a gesture. The nurse disappeared.

Markus had on a dark-blue linen blouse, such as all the patients of the working-class wear. He stood tall and erect, and Johannes observed that his face was less pale and sad than usual. The blue became his dark curling hair, and Johannes felt happy and confident as he looked at him — standing there so proud and calm and handsome.

"Take a seat," said Dr. Cijfer.

But Markus seemed not to have heard, and remained standing, while he nodded kindly and reassuringly to Johannes.

"Observe his pride," said Professor Bommeldoos, in Latin, to Dr. Cijfer.

"The proud find pride, and the gloomy, gloom; but the glad find gladness, and the lowly, humility," said Markus.

Dr. Cijfer stood up, and took his measuring instrument from the table. Then, in a quiet, courteous tone, he said:

"Will you not permit us, Mijnheer, to take your head measure? It is for a scientific purpose."

"It gives no pain," added Bommeldoos.

"Not to the body," said Markus.

"There is nothing in it to offend one," said Dr. Cijfer. "I have had it done to myself many a time."

"There is a kind of opinionativeness and denseness that offend."

Bommeldoos flushed. "Opinionativeness and denseness! Mine, perchance? Am I such an ignoramus? Opinionated and stupid!"

"Colleague!" exclaimed Dr. Cijfer, in gentle expostulation. And then, as he enclosed Markus's head with the shining craniometer, he gave the measurement figures. A considerable time passed, nothing being heard save the low voice of the doctor dictating the figures. Then, as if proceeding with his present occupation, taking advantage of what he considered a compliant mood of the patient, the crafty doctor fancied he saw his opportunity, and said:

"Your parents certainly dwelt in another country — one more southerly and more mountainous."

But Markus removed the doctor's hand, with the instrument, from his head, and looked at him piercingly.

"Why are you not sincere?" asked he then, with gentle stress. "How can truth be found through untruth?"

Dr. Cijfer hesitated, and then did exactly what Father Canisius had done — something which, later, he was of the opinion he ought not to have done: he argued with him.

"But if you will not give me a direct reply I am obliged to get the truth circuitously."

Said Markus, "A curved sword will not go far into a straight scabbard."

Professor Bommeldoos grew impatient, and snapped at the doctor aside in a smothered voice: "Do not argue, Colleague, do not argue! Megalomaniacs are smarter, and sometimes have subtler dialectic faculties, than you have. Just let *me* conduct the examination."

And then, after a loud "h'm! h'm!" he said to Markus:

"Well, my friend, then I will talk straight out to you. It is better so, is it not? Then will you give me a direct reply?"

Markus looked at him for some time, and said: "You cannot."

"I cannot! Cannot what?"

"Talk," replied Markus.

"I cannot talk! Well, well! I cannot talk! Colleague, you will perhaps take note of that. You say I cannot talk. What am I now doing?"

"Stammering," said Markus.

"Exactly—exactly! All men stammer. The doctor stammers, and I stammer, and Hegel stammers, and Kant stammers. . . ."

"They do," said Markus.

"Mijnheer Vis, then, is the only one who can talk. Is it not so?"

"Not with you," replied Markus. "In order to talk one must have a hearer who can understand."

Dr. Cijfer smiled, and whispered, not without a shade of irony, "Take care, Colleague! You also err in dialectics." But Bommeldoos angrily shook his round head with its bulbous cheeks, and continued:

"That is to say that you consider yourself wiser than all other men? Note the reply, Colleague."

"I think myself wiser than you," said Markus. "Decide yourself whether this means wiser than all other men."

"I have made a note of the reply," said Dr. Cijfer, while a sound of satisfaction came from his pursed-up lips.

Yet the professor took no notice of these ironical remarks, and proceeded:

"Now just tell me, frankly, my friend, are you a prophet? An apostle? Are you perhaps the King? Or are you God himself?"

Markus was silent.

"Why do you not answer now?"

"Because I am not being questioned."

"Not being questioned! What, then, am I now doing?"

"Raving," said Markus.

Again Bommeldoos flushed, and lost his composure.

"Be careful, my friend. You must not be impertinent. Remember that we may decide your fate here."

Markus lifted his head, with a questioning air, so earnest that the professor held his peace.

"With whom rests the decision of our fate?" asked Markus. Then, pointing with his finger: "Do you consider yourself the one to decide?"

Both of the learned ones were silent, being impressed for the moment. Markus continued:

"Why do not *you* now reply? And would you have decided otherwise had I not been what you term impertinent?"

Here Dr. Cijfer interposed:

"No, no, Mijneer, you mistake. But it is not nice of you

to offend a learned man like the professor here. We are performing a scientific task. You impress us as being a person of refinement and advancement, aside from the question of your being ill or not. For all that, it behooves you to have respect for science, and for those who are devoting all their efforts and even their lives to its development."

"Do you know," asked Bommeldoos, in a voice now near to breaking, "do you know what the man whom you have scoffed at as opinionated, stupid, and a ranter — what that man has written and accomplished?"

Then Markus's stern features relaxed, assuming a softer, more companionable expression, and he took a chair and sat down close beside his two examiners.

"Look," said he, showing both of his open palms, "your naked sensibilities protrude on all sides — from under the cloak of your wisdom. How otherwise could I have touched you?"

"Your wisdom — so much greater — does not, however, make you invulnerable to our opinion and stupidity," said Professor Bommeldoos, still tartly, indeed, but yet with far more courtesy.

"The most high wisdom of God does not make Him invulnerable to our sorrows and sins," returned Markus. "Wisdom is a covering which makes its wearer not insensible to suffering, but able to support it."

"Forever that speaking in metaphor!" exclaimed Bommeldoos. "Figures of speech do not instruct. A weak and childish mind always makes use of metaphors. Science demands pure speech and logical argument."

"Forgive me if I offend still further," said Markus, gently now and kindly, as he laid his hand on the black cloth enveloping the arm of the professor, "but it is exactly your own weakness that you cannot question. Science is the light of the Father. Why should not I respect it? And I know also what you have written and accomplished. But the most you did was to question imperfectly, and then to assume the

complete reply. That one should find it so difficult and unsatisfactory to reply amazes you, because you do not realize the imperfection of your questions. But the finest and clearest responses — those that are most satisfying and intelligible to all — await those who have learned better how to question. If I esteem myself wiser than you, it is solely because I realize that we have nothing but metaphors, and that we must patiently and unpretendingly decipher as a communication from the Father the meaning of all these metaphors. While you imagine that, from your words and documents, one may comprehend His living Being.”

“With your permission,” interrupted the professor. “You seem not to have read what I have written concerning the logical necessity of an incomprehensible basis for reality. Did you consider me such a dunce as not to have perceived that?”

“To speak of things is not necessarily to understand them,” replied Markus. “And so to speak of them is proof of not understanding.”

“I know very well what the human mind can compass, and what not; and in my last work, ‘On the Essence of Matter,’ I think I have defined the utmost to which the human mind can attain,” said Professor Bommeldoos.

“So did the Egyptians place the farthest reaches of the earth at the first falls of the Nile, to which the river was said to have flowed from heaven. And thousands and thousands of years passed away before they ventured to step beyond that boundary. And now the world is beginning to fraternize, and men to co-operate — now the barriers of the world are being removed to infinite distance. Who then shall term that which the human intellect can grasp, the extreme limit?”

“There remains a barrier, constituted by our material structure, just as there is a barrier because of our confinement to this terrestrial ball which we cannot leave,” declared Professor Bommeldoos, loudly and oracularly, encircling his

chin with his hand, as was his habit when in learned discussions. He seemed to have quite forgotten that he had before him a patient for examination.

"You read the book of life from the end toward the beginning," said Markus, "and see the world upside down. Why do you babble of a dead dust which would establish a limit to the life of the soul? But all matter is made of living thought, and nothing is lifeless, or formed without life. Mountains and seas are thoughts of the earth; and planets and suns, and all life, are the thoughts of God. The stone at your feet seems to you dead; but neither does the ant that creeps over your hand perceive the life of it. You have built up your own body —"

"Out of existent material," cried the professor.

"There is nothing existent as the effect of other life, that you cannot search into. And the operations of your life meet on all sides the counter-influences of other lives. But all is spirit and life. Shall, then, a builder say that the house he has built defines the boundary outside of which he cannot go?"

"But a race like the human race preserves its permanent characteristics," interpolated Dr. Cijfer.

"Why do we term permanent the creatures of one day? There is nothing permanent, and there are no persistent races. Life is a flowing water, a flaming fire — never the same from one second to another. But in your ignorance you make fixed definitions, write dead words and dead books, and imagine that you understand the things that live."

There was an instant of silence. Then Markus added:

"You have yourselves created death, and placed the barriers. Your words are diseased and rotten; and with those words you would analyze life. Would you perform an operation with unclean knives? But with your dead words you cut into life, and thus spread death."

Another silence, and then:

"Purify your thoughts and your words. Put away that which is impure — that is, the superfluous. Make a science

of words, as you have made a science of the stars — as exact and as sacred.

“Through co-operation and fellowship among scholars you have created a system of relations called mathematics. Make also such a system of significations, for you miss your mark with words, and fail to find that life which is the most beautiful and exquisite, as children miss the moths they would catch with their caps and with bags. And through co-operation and fellowship you shall create a demand, the response to which shall ring out like a revelation and an evangel — full, joyous, marvelous.”

Markus ceased speaking, and gazed as though into the far distance. For a while they all waited, respectfully, to see if he was going to say more, for they had been listening eagerly.

Then Dr. Cijfer said, in a gentle tone: “Your views are surely worthy of consideration. Neither did I make a mistake when I thought you a person of advancement and refinement. But let me remind you that we are here for the purpose of making a medical examination. Without doubt you will now indeed reply to the simple questions that I shall put to you.”

Markus, throwing a glance and a smile to Johannes, who had been listening with breathless attention, said to the learned men:

“I spoke not for you; that were fruitless. I spoke for him.”

After that he uttered not a word. Dr. Cijfer questioned with gentle stress, Professor Bommeldoos with vehement energy; but Markus was silent, and seemed not to notice that there were others in the room.

“I adhere to my diagnosis, Colleague,” said Bommeldoos.

Dr. Cijfer rang, and ordered the nurse to come.

“Take the patient to his ward again. He will remain, for the present, under observation.”

Markus went, after making a short but kindly inclination of the head to Johannes.

"Will you not tell us now, Johannes, what you know of this person?" asked Dr. Cijfer.

"Mijnheer," replied Johannes, "I know but little more of him than you do yourself. I met him two years ago, and he is my dearest friend; but I have seen him rarely, and have never inquired about his life nor his origin."

"Remarkable!" exclaimed Dr. Cijfer.

"Once again, Colleague, I stand by my diagnosis," said Bommeldoos. "Initial paranoia, with megalomaniacal symptoms, on the basis of hereditary inferiority, with vicarious genius."

XVIII

IN all this time the King and Queen were not yet married. That was the way of things in such lofty circles. They were still to attend many more banquets, to listen to many more speeches, and to make a great many more bows. I should judge, indeed, that they were just about half-way through.

And while most of the people acted as if they thought the ceremonies proper and pleasant, and took their part in the celebrations, there were others, who met to say that they were not altogether pleased. Such gatherings are called "indignation meetings." Of course they do not protest against the marriage of those two people — they have nothing to say against that — but only against the prolonged ceremonials. They consider the banquets, the fine array, the wine-drinking and the feasting occasioned thereby, both costly and unnecessary. They also consider the maintenance of a king and queen costly and unnecessary.

Such an opinion is, indeed, very uncommon, if not unheard of; for you remember that even the creatures of the pond into which Johannes dived with Windekind had found the need of a king who could eat a great deal. So, when Jan van Tijn and his wife got ready to attend that indignation meeting, Johannes wished to accompany them; for he was curious to hear what would be said there.

Like Marjon, Johannes was now in a boarding-house. He was with some friends of Jan — a worthy couple without children — who kept a total-abstinence coffee-house. The man was named Roodhuis, and he was tall and stout. He had a large, forceful face, light-colored eyes, and a small, fair moustache. He said little, and had a great dislike of alcohol and of soldiers. His wife, too, seldom spoke, but was very kindly and industrious. Through their little business they made a livelihood, and no more. They were interested in

everything that concerned the labor movement, and received in their small assembly-place all of the leaders and speakers prominent in the struggle. In that little hall, too, choir rehearsals were held, and little plays were given — as often as possible, adverse to war and to alcohol, and in favor of the so ardently desired Freedom and Fraternity.

Here Johannes found board and lodging, for which he did not need to pay, because he lent a helping hand in the work of the place.

He had just been having a hard experience: he had bidden his little friends good-by. Although they had grown larger and stronger, and were therefore no longer so tender and delicate as when he first saw them, yet the parting was full of sadness.

"Why do you go away, Johnny, and where are you going to live?" they asked.

"I am poor, and must work to earn my bread," replied Johannes.

"Oh, but Mama will give you money — will you not, Mama? And you can always eat and live here. Then you will not need to work," said Olga.

"You can have half of my share of oatmeal every time," said Frieda; "I get more than I want, though."

"No, children," said the mother, "it is not nice nor well to live upon what one gets from another, without working one's self. That is parasitism, and sinful before God. Johannes knows this, and being poor he is good to wish to work."

"Well, then, dear Johnny," said Olga, "I shall pray that God will make you rich quickly — as rich as we are; and then you will not need to work, and will come back again."

"I don't think it nice of God to make Johnny poor and us rich," said Frieda, pouting.

"Fie, Frieda, you must not say that," said Mevrouw. And then Johannes went away swiftly and bravely before the tears came.

Later, he heard that Van Lieverlee, whom he had not bidden

good-by, had told everybody that Johannes had left in a pet to live with some proletarians because of his having been repeatedly rebuked by himself on account of his excessive vanity.

In the little public room of the total-abstainers' coffee-house, "The Future," a large circle of congenial spirits sat waiting. Jan van Tijn was there, his wife, an infant, and the oldest girl. Marjon was there also, a neighbor having volunteered to care for the other Van Tijn children. Besides those named, there were about twenty other men and women in the little hall with its dirty, dingy hangings. On small tables in front of the visitors were cups of tea and chocolate. Many mothers had brought their infants. There was a dearth of talking and a deal of smoking; for it would have been too much, at the outset, to put a ban upon both alcohol and tobacco.

"Well, what did they find with their examination?" asked Jan van Tijn, as Johannes entered the smoky hall.

"He is not free yet," replied Johannes, "but he talked with them so finely and sanely they are bound to let him go."

"Good!" said Jan.

"Come here, Jo. Here's a cup of comfort for you, then," said Vrouw Roodhuis.

"But all the same," cried a man with a hoarse voice, a sallow face, and black beard, dressed in a brown Manchester suit, with a loose scarf around his sweater, and a pair of sandals on his bare feet, "you needn't think he will be set free. As soon as you begin to oppose that pest of hypocrites, you'll have the whole crew at your throat. That sort knows it all, every time — whether it be the pastor, or the dominie, or the general, or the professor — always the same pack; and if they once get you into their clutches you never get out again, whether in jail or in the madhouse or in the hospital; you never get out till they've given you a good start toward kingdom-come."

"Are they goin' to poison 'im?" asked a woman, in alarm. "What with? Ratsbane?"

"They'll poison him, for sure," answered the man in brown, "or they'll nag him to death, or starve him. They have methods and tricks enough — the villains!"

It was scarcely half-past eight o'clock yet, and the indignation meeting was to begin at nine. So it was proposed to shorten the time with recitations and singing. And this was done. First some one sang alone — the song of a poor conscript who was forced to go to war, and had conscientious scruples about it. Then they all sang a song of freedom.

After that, a very young typographer recited, with great fervor, a poem describing the way the Jews made merry at the crucifixion of Jesus on Golgotha; how they even took their little children with them, and hoped the anguish would be prolonged, that they might have the more pleasure.

The description of that cruelty, vehemently expressed, made a deep impression, and they sat listening with open mouths notwithstanding that they had heard it many times before. When it was over they all stamped uproariously on the floor.

At that moment the door opened, and Markus stood at the threshold of the little hall.

"Hurrah!" cried Johannes; and the others, who had just before been shouting "Hurrah for Golgotha!" now shouted "Hurrah for Markus!" They were all greatly excited and glad to see him free.

"Good-evening," said Markus, without giving token, himself, of being particularly glad. He wore again his customary workman's suit. From all sides hands were held out to him.

"I hadn't thought it," said Jan, "that they'd let you out of their clutches again. How did you manage it?"

"Let 'im have something to eat, first," said Vrouw Roodhuis. "Aren't you hungry, man? You couldn't have been in clover there."

"I shouldn't have had any appetite with all those mad folks

about," remarked another woman. "And then, too, when they wanted to poison you!"

"Yes, I am hungry," said Markus. And then bread and milk were given him.

"Why did you come here again?" asked Marjon.

Markus replied simply, "I had something more to say."

After he had eaten, he asked, "Is there a meeting to-night? Who called it?"

"The politicians," replied the young typographer.

"Felbeck wants to be President of the Republic," said the man in brown:

"Is there to be a debate?" asked Markus.

"Listen! Hakkema is coming, too. Oh, there'll be a racket!" said Jan.

"You might say a little something, too, Markus," said Roodhuis. "You must give that confounded military set a good thrashing, just such as you give the pious."

"I never have given the pious a 'thrashing,'" said Markus.

"That's a damn shame!" said the man with the sandals. "Religion is the root of all evil."

"No, it's militarism," said Roodhuis.

"No, alcohol," said the young typographer.

"Neither of them! It's eating meat that does it," said a pale, slim little woman, not yet twenty. "First you slaughter animals, then you eat them, then you drink, and then you murder and steal. One thing leads to another."

"So long, I say, as the people let themselves be taxed and fleeced by kings and priests, so long as they bow to a boss — whether they call him patron or God makes no difference — so long shall we remain in misery."

"Now, Markus," said Jan, "put in an oar yourself. You know better how to pull than the rest of 'em, I should say."

"Well, I will tell you a story," said Markus, "if you will promise to remember it, and not ask an explanation."

"Why not an explanation?" asked the man in brown.

"What does that mean? Is it a riddle?"

"I would just as soon be silent," said Markus.

"Come, now, Markus, pitch in! We won't ask you any more than you want to tell us."

"Listen, then," said Markus; and he began his story in a tone which constrained them all to silence.

"Once there were some field-laborers who were very poor — so poor that when they were asked how, with all their children, they could make both ends meet, they replied, 'The churchyard helps us out.'

"They had a rich landlord, and there was an abundance of land. But they were obliged to work so long every day, and so many days in succession, that they had no time to learn anything — not even the best way to plow and sow and reap. They did only the work they were bidden to do. So they remained dull because they were poor, and poor because they were dull. It seemed as if it would stay thus until eternity.

"But the landlord grew richer and richer, through the toil of his many laborers, and according to the increase of his wealth did he become more covetous and dissolute and indolent. And he demanded that his laborers work still harder because his desires were greater.

"But that they could not do. And the help of the churchyard was so very great that they were filled with fear.

"Then, through their great need, there came to one of them a little spark of light, and he said to the others: 'Brothers, this is all wrong. At this rate we shall very soon perish ourselves. We have hungered long enough. Let us slay him and seize the treasure we have collected for him.'

"That seemed to the others a good plan, and they wondered they had not thought of it before. Thereupon they slew the rich landlord, and divided his wealth. But, because he had lived a prodigal life, and since they themselves knew not the best way to plow, to sow, and to reap, they were in a short time still poorer than before.

"Then the son of the landlord, who had escaped, returned to them, and said:

" 'You see it was stupid of you to kill your master, for now you are bound to starve, because you cannot manage for yourselves.'

"Then they replied: 'Be to us then a better master, and we will let you live.'

"And the son of the landlord, who had the knowledge of his father, directed their work. And he became rich, and they remained poor — so poor that the churchyard had to help, although not to the former extent. Yet was there land in abundance.

"But the spark of knowledge which that extreme need had awakened continued to shine, and that one laborer said to his fellow-workers: 'Brothers, still is it not well, for, although we do not yet die ourselves from want, our children die. And although it is not right to slay one's lord, why should it be right to make him so rich that he becomes idle and lewd and wanton? We labor hard, and our toil enriches him. But he saves nothing. When we struck down his father we did not find enough to feed us for a week. We must not suffer this, for our wives and children can live upon what he wastes.'

"Then said another: 'We have no need of the landlord, but of his knowledge. For when we had slain our lord we found ourselves no richer. Nor had we the skill to create new wealth. Therefore are we even more miserable than before.'

"At that, a third one said: 'Lacking our labor, must he die; but without his knowledge we must starve. Let us go to him, and say that we will not give him our labor unless he give us his knowledge. If he refuse, then we shall die with him; if he assent, then we shall all live.'

"This the laborers did. And the young landlord, fearful lest he die, taught all who asked him with what they must fertilize the land, and what to sow, and how to irrigate, and all the secrets of tilling the soil, so that they might live. And he also gave to every one that asked it some land to cultivate, and a handful of grain. 'For my forefathers also began with no more than this,' said he.

"Then some of them took the handful of grain and ate it up, because they were so poor and so greedy. And they squandered away their piece of land, and asked not for the knowledge wherewith to till it.

"But others, accepting the knowledge, cultivated their piece of land with the mouthful of grain. But because they had for so long suffered a scarcity they were overjoyed at the harvest. And those — the first — who had again become poor, they pressed into their service. So each became a landlord, and they each gave to the first landlord a share of what was theirs. Thus the first landlord remained very rich, while the others were even richer, and the very poorest remained as miserable as before. All that resulted was the renewal of slothfulness, prodigality, and killing. And the churchyard had to keep on helping.

"But the spark of knowledge, once lighted, continued to burn, and one laborer said to the others: 'Brothers, still it is not well, for we remain unhappy beings. The rich are unhappy through their over-abundance, and the poor through their poverty. What, then, shall be done that it be otherwise?'

"Then said another: 'Brothers, we have taken away from our landlord both his power and his knowledge. We have no further need of him. But what master is it then of whom we have need? For we are as miserable as before.'

"Then said another: 'Brothers, we still need a master, but one who will teach us wisdom and charity; for is it not ignorance through which some have eaten up their seed-grain; and a lack of charity that has caused others to waste all their harvest, and compelled the poorest to serve them?'

"Then they chose a master who taught them wisdom and charity, and that master said: 'You shall not give full possession of the land, for it is lent to all; and of your harvest shall you not — you and your household — consume more than is good for your health. And all the surplus shall you sow again; for there is land enough. And no man shall work for another who can himself work and yet does not.'

"And they did according to this command. And under that master they founded a realm of plenty that was called 'Freedom.'"

Markus was silent, and so for a while were his listeners. At last, the man in the brown suit said:

"Well, now, but they might have done that just as well without master or mandate."

"Say, Markus," said Jan van Tijn, "if you happen to know of such a gentleman, just quietly set me down on the waiting list. My word for it, if he's boss, I'll not go on a strike."

"Well, heaven help us! Are you an anarchist?" asked the other. "You throw the whole principle overboard."

Jan just glanced at him. "I don't hear anything fall yet," said he, drily. And then, looking to right and left at his neighbors:

"D'ye hear anything?"

The company laughed. Markus, looking earnestly at him, said:

"You can at once enter that service, Jan, as can every one."

"What a silly gull!" said he in the brown suit.

XIX

ON the way to the Assembly-room they passed the Royal Residence. The windows were a blaze of light, for another banquet had just been held, and the marriage was thus brought a step nearer. The lackeys looked down at the thronging multitude, and smiled disdainfully. In front of the palace, erect upon their horses, their carbines at their hips, sat the hussars. The people shouted. They wanted to see the bridal pair do some more bowing.

And, verily, after a while, open flew the balcony doors, and out came the King and Queen — for all the world like the cuckoo of a clock at the stroke of the hour; and there they bowed and bowed — many times more than the hours that were struck by the clock. Thus the crowd had its will, and shouted to hearts' content. At the same time Johannes also felt, distinctly, a thrill of enthusiasm, although it was mingled with pity; for it did seem as if the crowd found delight in keeping those two poor people bowing, without asking if they had the least desire to do so, so soon after dinner, and after a busy day.

At the indignation meeting it was very warm and crowded. People stood packed at the entrance. Inside, above a haze of tobacco smoke, Dr. Felbeck could be seen sitting at a table covered with green. In front of him were a black hammer, a carafe, and glasses. The table stood on a little stage between side-scenes that represented a forest by moonlight.

There was a great deal of bustle and noise in the hall. Above the clamor rose the cries of the colporteurs reiterating the virtues of their weeklies and pamphlets: "Buy the Pathfinder — three cents!" "Throne, Exchange and Altar; or the Robber Conspiracy Unmasked — one cent!" "Hypocrisy; or the Source of all Depravity — one cent!" "Who are the Murderers? — two cents!"

Dr. Felbeck looked around the hall, casting piercing, frowning glances, like a general surveying the field of battle. At times he chatted with the associate chairman who sat beside him, apparently about this or that advocate or opponent whom he observed in the hall. At times, also, he nodded smilingly to some one in the audience.

The doors were closed, and no one else was permitted to enter. A few helmeted policemen took their stand at the entrance.

The chairman — a spruce young gentleman — after straightening his eye-glasses, grasped with his left hand the old speaker's hammer, rapped upon the table with it, and spoke a few words. Gradually it grew more still. Then Dr. Felbeck stood up, resting upon the table with both hands — his head between his shoulders like a cat about to make a spring. Then, rising to his full height, and glancing several times at his audience — challenging, and certain of success — he began: "Comrades!"

The speech lasted an hour and a half. What he said accorded very well with that which Johannes had heard him say when they first met. The downtrodden proletarian must in the end gird himself against the oppressor — against the rotten civic society, against the gentry of the safety-box, who are supported by the soldiers, assisted by priests, and represented by the Crown. The people must become conscious of their power, for the people are the source of all wealth, and to the people belongs the future. If only the laborers would act in unison, they would be able to make the laws. They were by far the majority. They might compose the Parliament, command the military, possess the collective wealth. Then they could make better laws, and could take from the rich their unmerited privileges. Then would come a time of real liberty and fraternity.

Thereupon Dr. Felbeck made an estimate of the number of guldens a minute that the King had to spend; adding the

statement that whole families of laboring men must live for a week upon no more. He showed how many people must work hard, continually, to pay for all that festivity and magnificence. He showed in detail how the rich live, and what splendor was theirs; and he claimed that such beauty and pleasure were the right of each and all. And with tears in his voice, he told them how, with his meagre wages, the poor wage-earner must make both ends meet.

He said the laborer must learn to hate his enemy, and not let himself be deluded by oily-tongued preachers of peace who were paid by the rich; for then he would surely remain in his misery. And yet, in the end, they must certainly have a share of the pleasure — they who had heretofore always come out of the little end of the horn.

All that Dr. Felbeck said was listened to with avidity. The listeners grew more and more attentive, and the speaker more and more vehement. There were frequent outbursts of laughter from the audience, and the hall trembled with the stamping of feet and the clapping of hands. Sometimes there was cheering to the echo. And when the speaker ended — with a fiery, well-turned clause in which all were urged to join the International Social Democratic Labor-Party — Grand Army of Laborers — there followed such an uproar that Johannes lost all sense of sight and hearing.

His duty done, the speaker sat down, yet he looked around with some anxiety at the succeeding speakers.

Again the hammer sounded: "Would any one like to add a few words?"

Three — four — hands went up.

"Hakkema has the floor."

"Oh, indeed!" said Jan. "Now for a Punch-and-Judy session!"

Hakkema was a small, stocky man, with long hair combed straight back to his neck. His voice was rough and harsh from much speaking, and as he spoke he dropped his head back, in such a way that his shaggy beard stuck out in

front. He began very softly, almost hesitatingly — apparently to flatter the former speaker. But very speedily the audience observed — what every one had expected — that he was deriding him. His deep voice grew steadily louder and rougher, and his jokes tarter and tougher. Part of the audience, carried away, and agog for fresh taunts, burst out in loud, insulting laughter, while another part enlivened itself by hissing and whistling, and by shouts of derision.

The irony chiefly concerned the fact that the former speaker termed himself a proletarian, while at the same time he owned a villa at Driebergen, and had a son preparing to be a lawyer. Of course, he appeared to be quite disinterested and would fight for the people, if only the people would be so good as to send him to the House of Representatives, with a salary of forty guldens a week. Certainly, if the King should make Dr. Felbeck Minister to-morrow, with a salary of eight thousand guldens, Dr. Felbeck would accept it out of sheer self-sacrificing devotion to the people. And then the laborer could demand audience of Dr. Felbeck, and ask why the portion on the table of the laborer should still remain so small, and also when the general national distribution would begin.

After a half-hour of such talk, the speaker ended with a stimulating appeal for a purified class struggle in which no little lords among the proletarians should be tolerated, and in which — pointing at Dr. Felbeck, who, smiling scornfully, sat sharpening a lead-pencil—the wolves in sheeps' clothing should be restrained; a struggle in which war should be declared, not only against all tyranny, all coercion, but also against the despotism of party; a struggle in which there should be strife until men had a free society where each might take what he pleased, without lords, without bosses, without safety-boxes, without gods, and without laws.

The applause for this speaker was none the less thundering, mingled, however, with shrill whistlings, and cries of "Throw him out!"

But Felbeck was a match for the man. With furious ges-

tures and banging of his fists on the green-covered table, he called his opponent a deceiver of the people, a man without judgment or conscience, an enemy of the laborer, a sower of discord who would never bring anything to pass save disorder and confusion.

The audience grew more and more excited. Ten, twenty speakers at once, stood up in their places. Angry words were shouted back and forth. Everybody thought it time to say something. The women grew nervous, and the policemen looked at their chief as if only awaiting a signal to put an end to the row.

All this time, Markus, without having made a sign either of approval or of censure, had been sitting between Marjon and Johannes, with the family of Van Tijn.

"Have you been listening, Markus?" asked Marjon, for it seemed to her as if his thoughts were elsewhere. But he nodded "Yes."

"Say something, then," said Marjon.

"Yes, do," urged Johannes. "Tell them which one is right."

"Speak out, Markus. The one who knows ought to tell," said Van Tijn.

"That is not easy to do," said Markus. Then he stood up.

His figure now, as always, riveted attention, and the adroit leader of a tumultuous meeting felt instantly to whom he must yield the floor in order to re-establish calm.

Thus Markus' first words rang out, amid the lessening uproar, as in a subsiding storm. And as he spoke it finally grew very still. But there was no sign either of assent or of disagreement.

"There are fathers and mothers here," said Markus, "who know what spoiled children are. The spoiled child that is always coaxed and indulged, like the one that is always constrained, becomes at last capricious, malicious, and sickly.

"Shall we then treat one another as we may not our children? People are flattered by undue praise of their power

and influence — are carried away by the sweetness of fine words concerning the injustice they have too long endured and concerning their right to property and to happiness. You all listen to that eagerly, do you not?

"But that to which one listens most eagerly, it is not always best to say. There are things hard to hear, which must, however, be said and be listened to.

"I know that you are not going to applaud me, as you did those two others; but yet I am a better friend to you than they are.

"Among you there are those who suffer injustice. Yet you must not exalt yourselves. You should be ashamed of it. For whoever continues to suffer injustice is too weak, too stupid, or too indifferent to overcome it.

"You must not ask, 'Why is it done to me?' but, 'Why cannot I overcome it?'

"The answer to that question is, Weakness, stupidity, and indifference.

"I do not blame you; but I say, blame not others, only yourselves. That is the sole way to betterment.

"Is there one here — a single one — who dares assure me, solemnly, that if an honorable place were offered him by his master, on account of his good work and his good judgment, with higher pay than that of his comrades — that he would, in such case, reply, 'No, my master, I will not accept; for that would be treachery to my comrades, and desertion to your party.' Is there one such? If so, let him stand up."

But no one stirred, and the silence remained unbroken.

"Well, then," continued Markus, "neither is there here a single one who has the right to rail at the rich whom he would hate and supplant. For each of you in their place would do what the rich do. The affairs of the world would be no better conducted were you, not they, at the helm.

"How you delude and flatter and fawn upon one another! You continually hear that you are the innocent, downtrodden ones who have so much to suffer; who are worthy of so much

better things; who are so good and so powerful; who would rule the world so well; whose turn it now is to have ease and luxury.

"Men, even if this were so, would it be well that you should always be told it? Would it not make of you conceited fools? Would not the reality revenge itself frightfully upon yourselves, and upon those fawners and flatterers?"

"It is, instead, falsehood and conceit.

"You would not rule the world better — you have neither the wisdom nor the charity to do so. You are no more worthy of pity than are your oppressors, for when they injure your bodies they injure also their own souls. The rich are in paths more perilous than are the poor, and it is always better to suffer wrong than to commit it.

"The good things of the earth do not yet belong to you, for you would make the same misuse of them as do those against whom you are being incited.

"Wage war, and desist not until death; but the war of the righteous against the unrighteous, of the wise and charitable against the stupid and sensual. And question not whence come your companions in arms, for you are not the only unhappy ones, you are not alone merciful among men, and goodwill and uprightness are not the exclusive possessions of the poor."

Although it seemed to Johannes that Markus' voice was not so wonderfully impressive as at other times, the people had become very attentive. And when he stopped, and sat down without having made a particularly oratorical or cumulative close, they all were still for many seconds. But not a foot stamped, not a hand stirred.

And this very silence made Dr. Felbeck angry.

"Comrades," he began, in his most scornful manner, with an envious, nasal twang in his voice, "we do not need to ask whence the wind blows. This is one more of that obsolete little band of old-fashioned, bourgeois idealists who wish to re-

form the world with tracts and sermons, and to keep the toilers content in subjection and resignation. Laborers, have you not, I ask, practised patience long enough? Have you, then, no right to the pleasures of life? Must you fill the hungry stomachs of your little ones with palaver about wisdom and charity?"

"No, no!" roared the crowd, freed instantly from the spell of respect under which for a moment they had been held.

"Do not let yourselves be befogged by those tedious maunderings that would reason away the strife of the classes. Oh, true! To such the gentlemen of the safety-box listen eagerly enough, for they are, oh, so afraid of the War of the Classes! But if they were to hear this gentleman talk, they would shout their approval. Take notice, this gentleman will do much to further it. Of course, they have his medal all ready for him."

"And a pension," said Hakkema, while the audience laughed.

"He is an unfrocked priest," said he in the Manchester suit.

"Damn ye, are ye a workman?" cried a voice at the back of the hall. "And do ye mean to say it's my fault that my children perish with hunger, and not the fault of those cursèd blood-suckers? You're a God-forsaken hypocrite, no laborer!"

Markus sat very still, gazing straight before him into the flame of a gas-jet. But Johannes saw that he was deathly pale, and that his eyes seemed to sink deeper into their sockets. Beads of perspiration were standing on his temples.

Hakkema stood up.

"Now I chance to know, fellow-laborers, that this man has escaped from a madhouse. That is a mitigating circumstance. Otherwise," Hakkema went on, drawing his clenched hand from his pocket, and thrusting it out in front of him, "otherwise I would have my fist at his jaw, and ask him if he had no feeling at all in his accursèd carcass, that he begrudged the laborer his pittance of the good things of life. It's an

enormous amount of pleasure, isn't it — glorious pleasure — you've been able to get on two hundred cents a day!"

"You cad!" cried the young typographer, to Markus — the very same youth who had recited the poem about Golgotha.

"I'll invite you sometime to my home — with my six children, and a seventh one coming, and the clothes in the pawnshop, and no warm food for three days — then you can see what a fine time of it the laborer has."

"Vile, hateful traitor!" "Hireling socialist!" "I'll ring yer neck for ye!" "I'll guzzle yer blood, ye hateful cur!" Such cries as these rang from various sides, and the uproar steadily increased.

The man in the brown suit shrieked invectives without cessation — "Cad! Carrion! Thief!" and the worst ones he could think of; while, in his excitement, the tears ran down his pale, drawn cheeks.

The din was deafening.

Johannes clenched his fists, and stared at the pale, passionate faces with their evil, flashing glances, which threatened them on every side. He saw Marjon beside him, her eyes distended with terror. Markus sat immovable. The drops of moisture were so thick upon his forehead and cheeks that Johannes took his handkerchief and wiped them away.

Jan van Tijn stood up, but he felt he could do nothing to stem that tide. He began, "Say, are you people —" But he was shouted down, with threats of a broken head; and already fists and chairs were upraised.

Then the chief gave the signal, for which the police had so long waited, and declared in a hard, impartial voice that the place must be vacated. And this work was expedited, with the calm satisfaction of officials who had indeed hoped that matters would end thus — as usual.

The Roodhuis family and the Van Tijns remained with Markus, while Johannes and Marjon were a little in the rear.

Roodhuis and Van Tijn wished, they said, to protect Markus if he should need their help. Markus said, "No need."

"Please, Markus," pleaded Van Tijn, "don't think it means so much. I know the workmen. They fly off the handle so easily, but by morning they'll shriek something else. They're not so bad — only a bit rough, you know — sort o' half wild yet. Will ye believe me, Markus, and not despise 'em for't, nor turn yer back on 'em for't, Markus?"

"No, Jan, surely not, if only I have the strength," said Markus, in a hoarse, unsteady voice.

XX

ONE chilly autumn day, the three sat together in a gloomy bar-room, just as formerly they had done in the small mining town. And, also, the fourth one was there, but in a pitiable condition.

Keesje lay in Markus' lap, under a covering of faded, old red baize. His little black face was as full of folds as an old shoe, his body wasted away, and he was panting and gasping for breath. A hairy little arm came out from under the red baize, and a long, slim black hand clasped Markus' thumb; and whenever Markus had occasion to use his hand, one could see the little black monkey-hand stretch out and feel around, while the brown eyes looked restlessly backward, as if now all safety were gone.

They were in the total-abstainers' coffee-house, for Roodhuis continued to proffer hospitality to Markus, although this did not help his business. After that indignation meeting Markus' stay with Roodhuis was made an excuse by all his friends for their avoidance of the coffee-house. Except Van Tijn and a few other independent ones, none of the old customers returned; but Roodhuis would not permit Markus to go away on that account.

"Now, you must never again lower yourself for that rabble that doesn't understand you, anyway, and isn't worth the trouble," said Marjon, with the pride of one who knows what takes place in high circles, and esteems one's self of better origin.

"Tell me, Johannes, what you would do," said Markus, kindly, while he warmed Keesje's little hand in his own.

"I do not know, Markus," replied Johannes. "It was a wretched evening, for I could not endure that it should cost you so dearly. But if they had done it to me I would not have cared."

"That is right," said Markus. "And now, my dear Johannes, do not think that I am less submissive than yourself. Did you indeed fancy it?"

Johannes shook his head.

"Well, then, it is not scorn which humiliates, but the doing of unworthy deeds. And those people are not less worthy of my help than they were before. Evil inclinations are good inclinations gone astray."

"Then are there not any wicked people?" asked Marjon.

"Ay, ay! Because there is not a black light, is there therefore no night? Calmly call a villain a villain, but take care that you are not one yourself, Marjon."

"But are there not, for the Father, any evil-doers?" asked Johannes.

"Why should there not be for the Father what there is for us? But He knows — what we do *not* know — the why and the wherefore."

"But, Markus, I saw what you endured that wretched evening. And it must not be. Must you, then, let what is high and noble be so misunderstood and defiled?"

Markus bowed his head in silence over the coughing monkey. Then he said gently:

"I have suffered, my two dear ones, because my Father has not given me strength enough. Did you not see how they listened to me, and trusted, for an instant? But then my Father, in His own way, which is beyond our comprehension, gave power again to the Evil One. Had I more wisdom I should have been able so to speak that they would have understood me. Thus I suffered doubly: on account of their dulness and wickedness, and from shame, not of them, but because of my own weakness. And this I say, Johannes, that you may know what weakness also there is in one who is stronger than you yourself will ever be."

Johannes, his chin upon his clasped hands, looked at him long and thoughtfully, and then whispered:

"Dear Brother, I believe I understand."

In this way they lived together for some time, and saw one another frequently. Johannes and Marjon performed their daily tasks in the boarding-house, and Markus went out every day to look for work. But Johannes was sad and troubled to see that Markus looked more pale and weary than formerly; and as Johannes lay awake in the night, he heard his brother, who slept beside him, sigh often, and softly moan.

One morning Markus did not go out, for Keesje lay still, looking, and could neither get up nor eat. When Markus took away his hand Keesje began to whine; and this brought on a paroxysm of coughing. Markus set him in a patch of sunshine that fell upon the counter from an upper window. There he brightened up a bit, and looked at the flies that, chilled with the cold, crept over the counter near his head. But toward night, when Marjon came, it was all over with Keesje.

He was all shriveled up, and as light as a handful of straw. They put him into a cigar box, and the trio buried him at night, by the light of a lantern, in the bit of soggy, black ground between the foul fences that had to represent a garden, and where shavings and papers supplied the place of flowers and trees.

Marjon and Johannes tried to control themselves, but did not succeed. First one and then the other began to cry.

"Truly, it is silly," said Johannes, "sobbing over such a creature, when so many thousands of people are starving every day."

Said Markus, "There are thousands starving here, and infinitely many more in all parts of my Father's world, but yet none cry a tear too much who cry as you do now. The tears that the angels will shed for Johannes, he will need as much as Keesje needs these tears of his."

XXI

AT last they had had enough of smiling, of dining, and of bowing, and the King and Queen were actually to be married in the Cathedral, at eleven o'clock in the morning. Furthermore, it was to be a great feast day, with brilliant illuminations at night, in all the towns of the good Netherlands.

What Hakkema had said of Markus — that he had escaped from an asylum — was not true. He had simply been released because he was not considered dangerous, and because, nowadays, the asylums, especially those of the working-class, are already too crowded.

But he had been warned sternly that a watch would be kept over him, and that he would be rearrested at the slightest disturbance of the peace.

Since the indignation meeting, the police had been a number of times to see Roodhuis, to inquire after Markus. It was further said that he had been advised not to speak in public, because such speaking might furnish a pretext for his immediate arrest.

Markus had not again spoken in public, but had been seeking work. Sometimes he went afoot to neighboring towns, many hours' distant — but always fruitlessly. He did not always lodge with Roodhuis, but sometimes with a kind-hearted and trusted friend, at another place. Johannes noticed that Markus was very poor, for he was obliged to live upon what his friends gave him, and they could spare but little.

"Why do we not travel together, we three," asked Johannes, "just as we used to? We could surely earn our living."

"Yes, those were good times," said Marjon. "And if Markus would go with us, we would have still better ones."

He makes even better music than ours. We shall earn money."

But Markus shook his head.

"No, dear children, for us three those good times will not come again. My singing-time is passed, and I must remain here, for my task is not yet done. But it soon will be."

"And then shall we go together?" asked Marjon.

"No; then I shall go alone," replied Markus, briefly.

"Why alone?" asked Johannes and Marjon, almost in the same breath. And there followed a silence of some moments' duration.

Then said Markus: "You will be faithful and remember me and my words, and act as if I were with you, will you not?"

They sighed, and thereafter their words were few and brief; nor did they sing.

But on the morning of that festal day, when the bells of all the Netherlands were ringing, Markus came into the little tavern with a face more joyful than Johannes had ever seen him wear. His eyes shone, and a smile was on his lips.

"Do you hear the bells, Johannes?" asked he. "It is a holiday."

Johannes had entirely forgotten about the holiday.

"How splendid, Markus, to have you so glad. Has something good happened?"

"Have you struck it?" asked Juffrouw Roodhuis. "Happy man!"

"The worst is over," said Markus. "Yes, Juffrouw, to-day I'll 'strike it', and it is well."

After eating some bread, said he: "Johannes, go to the Van Tijns and ask if Marjon may go with us. If you would like to, we will go to see the King and Queen."

"Where?" asked Johannes.

"In the church, Johannes. The sexton is a good friend of mine, and has promised me a place for you both, near the singers."

I shall not tell you in detail of the ceremony, for you may read all about it in the papers: how the church was crammed with the stateliest and most distinguished citizens of the Netherlands, all of them beautifully dressed; how the floral decorations were furnished by a certain firm; how people stood at the door all night that they might be the first to enter in the morning; how the bridal pair came in to the music of Mendelssohn's wedding march; how charming the bride looked, although a little pale; how an impressive train of brilliantly decorated military men and magistrates followed the royal pair, and grouped themselves about them, till the church interior seemed truly magnificent; how respectfully the people stood, and how stirred they all were; how the Minister made a brief but touching speech, that affected all profoundly; how finely, during the customary formalities, the King carried himself, and how winsomely the Queen; how the Queen, moreover, said "Yes" in a voice that thrilled all present; how the King then spoke a few words, in which he promised to consecrate all his powers to the good of his beloved people, and invoked the blessing of God upon his difficult but exalted task; and how, finally, a thundering "Long live the King!" and "Long live the Queen!" burst forth, making the whole vast edifice resound.

With all of this the papers have accurately acquainted you. But you might perhaps recall that a number of journals had something to say of a slight disturbance caused by the appearance of one who probably was not quite right in his head. The incident, however — so the papers averred — had no significance whatever, and was speedily forgotten; such instances often occurring at ceremonies attended by great crowds.

The disturber of the peace — so the papers stated — was one whom the police had long held under surveillance, on account of his peculiar behavior. He was, therefore, promptly taken into custody, the police, indeed, having had no little difficulty in protecting him from the fury of the populace. The royal pair, not in the least agitated by the occur-

rence, drove home through the enthusiastic rejoicings of the people, greeting all with friendly smiles.

This, then, was the information imparted by some few of the newspapers — not all of them. But now I will tell you what actually took place. I know well, because Johannes and Marjon — for whom the sexton had secured a fine place with the singers in the church choir, and who, therefore, witnessed everything — told me all about it.

In the nave of the cathedral, above the arches of the aisles, and running beneath the high windows, is a very narrow gallery having a stone balustrade. The only way to this gallery is through small doorways called "Monks' Holes." They are so named because from them, in olden times, the friars could witness the church rites below.

When the King had ended his brief speech, and all present, being deeply impressed, held respectful silence, there appeared up above, through one of these openings, a man in a spacious, dun-grey mantle, with a white cloth about his neck. And suddenly, in the deep silence, the voice of this man — much fuller and more powerful than that of the King — cried out, so that they echoed and re-echoed from every corner of the great temple, these words:

"King of men!"

At once everybody looked up, including the King and Queen, who were directly opposite.

But the man was not looking at them. He held his head a little backward, and his dark hair fell down in curls over the white linen. His eyes, beneath their half-closed lids, were gazing into the light of the arched windows opposite him as if to screen the inner vision from the too fierce outer light. His figure was tall and erect. One hand rested on the white balustrade, the other was raised to the height of his head, in a strange and majestic posture of authority.

Again he cried:

"Hail to thee, King of men!"

The master of ceremonies with his white staff, the generals, stiff with gold, the diplomats and magistrates, all looked with something of wonder, by turns at the speaker, at one another, and at the royal pair, not knowing but that it was a special addition to the program, of which there was no official mention. But since it had made an impression, and seemed to befit the temper and spirit of the assembly, all continued to listen. And the conductor of the choir of children, whose turn it now was to take part, waited and listened as well. And quite without hindrance, Markus spoke the following:

"Hail to him who should be called the King of men! Blessed is he who merits that name.

"For he is crowned by the grace of God, which is wisdom. His sceptre is love, and his seat is righteousness.

"Among the millions who wander and complain, he is the strong and wise one, who goes before and lights the way.

"Blessed is his progress, for without effort he leads the multitude.

"Blessed are his thoughts, for beyond all others he foresees the marvels of the Father.

"Blessed is his word, for he is the poet who fashions worlds after the pattern of the Father. God's mouthpiece he is.

"Joyful is he in the midst of sadness and happy in all adversity; for wherever he goes he dwells in the shadow of the Eternal, and hears His wings above him.

"Among the countless lame and maimed, in the multitude of the defective and infirm, he is the only perfect one, showing what it is possible for man to be.

"Strong is he, and beautiful in person; proud and unpretentious; daring and patient; wise in great, and sagacious in lesser, things; stern in deed, yet tender-hearted; unlimited in love; gentle, but never weak.

"For he is the only hale flower of perfect bloom in a full field of the pale and the deformed. Honor be to him! Elect him, and encompass him with care and with homage; for in him exists the future and the entire race.

"He is the director of the ways of men, and bears with ease the burden of their sorrow and their care, for he knows the issue and the solution.

"He is the maker and maintainer of order in human relations, because he knows and comprehends, and beholds in his mind, like an accurate map, the longings and emotions of men.

"He operates not through pressure of fear or force, but through the superiority of his mind, which must be perceptible to all.

"He is the regulator of the labor of men, teaching them how to bring forth and to distribute in such manner that none may have overflow while others suffer scarcity; and also that none may be idle while others overwork. He plans and confirms the bond through which each finds his place in the great family, so that life becomes fine and orderly and easy, like the figures of a well-drilled dance.

"Such is the King of men. His power is given him, not through the unreasoning, capricious fancy of the undeveloped who are the slaves of custom and of idle, impressionable fear, but through the reasonable views of the multitude who follow and honor, in him, their own best self.

"He moves not in the splendor of external pomp, neither wears he a golden crown; but around his head streams, visible to all, the grace of God, which is wisdom, love, and beauty."

When Markus had said this, people here and there began to be restless. The master of ceremonies indicated that enough had been said, and sent one lackey to the choir-conductor to ask why, according to regulations, there was no singing, and another lackey to the door to see if the carriages were in waiting.

But the carriages were not yet there, and the children who were to sing the chorus now in order, remained, with perplexed faces and open mouths, gazing at that strange figure speaking as if out of the sky in such a marvelous voice. The

conductor failed to attract their attention, and realized that all his painstaking, studious preparations for the song were useless.

Markus paid not the slightest heed to the increasing unrest and nervousness, nor to the commanding gestures of the irritated master of ceremonies that he cease speaking; instead, he now raised his voice until it reverberated from the high vaultings:

"Where is he, that King of men?"

"Where is the people's King? Where is the people's Queen — his peer — who supports and supplements him?"

"Seek them, ye unhappy ones! Never so much as now have you had need of them.

"Seek them in every land; for misery and ugliness and barrenness and confusion are not much longer to be endured.

"Seek them in the city and in the country. Seek them also in the alleys and in the hovels. Yes, seek them in the prisons and in the places of execution. For even so great is your confusion."

Then, bending his head toward the royal pair below, and fastening upon them and the surrounding group of splendid notables his flashing glance, Markus shouted in vehement, resounding tones:

"But seek them not here. Has the light of the grace of God pointed hither?"

"Has the grace of God become here evident to all, like a shining aureole of wisdom and love and beauty?"

"What children and mischief-makers you are — you there, with your robes of state, and your badges of dignity, — that you think to create a king without the manifestation of the grace of God!"

"Deluded by an empty sound, by a dynastic name, you in your ignorance would proclaim, 'Here is a king, and here therefore must God's grace be manifested, for even so we wish it to be.'

"Would you, like mischief-makers and frivolous bugle-blowers, dictate to your God, and show Him where to bestow His grace?

"Who has beheld in this pair of wretched human beings the wisdom, beauty, love, and power which are the visible tokens of God's elect?

"Do you not tremble, then, at the fearful responsibility you take upon yourselves, and put also upon these two pitiable people, by this blasphemous child's-play?"

The excitement now became more serious. That the King and Queen, counts and barons, generals, court marshals, state counselors and ministers should be called mischief-makers and frivolous bugle-blowers, was not to be tolerated.

The King grew red, coughed in his glove, and looked angrily at the master of ceremonies. The Queen, on the contrary, grew pale, and nervously fingered the folds of her heavy, white-satin train. Half turning round, a quick-witted courtier beckoned to the organist, and shouted: "Music!" A general — Johannes recognized him as one of the "Pleiades" — in an attempt at guarding his Rulers, cried out with all the dramatic importance and bluntness of a war-charge:

"Silence, miscreant!"

But it had to be admitted that this sounded more ridiculous than impressive. And not one of the courtiers, officers, or magistrates felt individually powerful enough to set himself by voice and bearing against that forceful speaker. Each felt that he would appear theatrical. And the man in the grey cloak, up above there, was not that. Besides, the assembly gave no countenance to such effort, and was, like every great gathering of people, under the influence of the most powerful personality.

At last, the organist comprehended what was desired of him in this critical situation, and drawing out all the stops he sent forth a heavy peal of trembling sound. In the mean-

time, two policemen were despatched aloft to silence the undesirable speaker.

But the majestic music rang out upon the words of Markus as if in solemn confirmation. So at least it seemed to Johannes, and to many others in the church. Markus ceased speaking, and appeared to be listening, pensively.

The policemen returned without having attained their object. The gallery could only be reached by climbing over a great beam, having broken and decayed supports, one hundred feet above the floor. The officers, becoming dizzy, lost their zest for the affair, and the firemen had to be sent for.

The music stopped again, and yet there was no continuance of the ceremonies. Markus still stood calmly in his elevated place, looking down upon the throng below with that sad expression of countenance which Johannes knew so well. And yet again, softer, but with keen and cutting penetration :

“Oh, ye poor, poor people! Slaves of the devil, called custom!

“You know no better, and cannot do otherwise. You mean to perform your duty, and to reach that which is good and holy.

“How would you possibly find your King? And how would you maintain order — holy order — without these two people; without him whom you happen to have named your king, as you might have named some foundling?

“But notwithstanding you have felt, every one of you, that I spoke the truth just now, you yet will continue this unblushing lie because you dare not do otherwise, and because you know no other way.

“But bethink yourselves, unhappy beings! Cowardice and weakness shall not excuse you, if, knowing the lie, you adhere to it, and, seeing the truth, you accept it not.

“What you endure is indeed terrible. I esteem you still more worthy of pity than the neglected people out of whose misery you have extracted your splendor.

“You have burdened this poor pair of human beings with

royalty — a power befitting only the strongest and the wisest among men.

“Thus do you crush their weak spirits under a weight which only the strongest can bear. You desecrate the name of King — you blaspheme against God, whose grace is not subject to your command.

“You dazzle your bewildered people with a blinding glare, as if they truly had a king. But it is an idle puppet-show, to comply with a hollow peace and a defective method. There is none among you who has the wisdom and the might to lead this people into righteousness; and yet you bear all the responsibility for their confusion, their ignorance, their crudeness, and their misery.

“And they are the least guilty, because, in working for your luxury, they miss the opportunity to learn.

“But you pride yourselves upon your knowledge and your refinement. You know how the industrious lack food, and the rich have the privilege of idleness. You know how an overabundance flows to you from the deprivations of the neglected. You know the injustice of all this, and yet permit it. And on these two unfortunates you impose the responsibility and the lie.

“But you know — and you shall not be justified!

“And you, two unfortunates, corrupted by the burden of your imposed greatness — poor man, poor, poor little woman! The superhuman power to break the spell of lies round about you will not be yours. May the Good Father, who hath not poured out His grace upon you, encompass you with His compassion.”

Just then an excited young adjutant drew out a revolver, and cried, “He insults the Queen!”

A more moderate diplomat, fearing a panic, held back his hand. The cry “He insults the Queen!” was repeated at the entrance to the church. And an uproar was heard outside, for, at the coming of the firemen, the waiting crowds had over-

heard something about a murderer, or a madman, who was in the upper part of the church.

The helmeted men now appeared in the small gallery, and dragged Markus aside. They immediately bound him with strong cords, fearing he might throw them down below. Then one of them first made his way over the big beam, and ordered Markus to come to him. After that, the other cautiously followed.

The assembly could not see this, because it took place in the dark ridge of the aisle; but all breathed freely once more, now that the powerful voice up above was silent. Again the organ pealed forth, and the royal pair, ceremoniously preceded by the court official, at last proceeded toward the exit, for the carriages were now ready. The singing by the children was omitted. Everything else went just as the daily papers have recorded it for you.

Markus, tightly bound, was led out through a side door, yet not so secretly but that the crowd became aware thereof, and a riotous mob soon encircled the firemen and their prisoner.

"The Queen insulted!" they shrieked. "Kill him! Orange forever!" And they pressed closer and closer.

When Johannes and Marjon, hurried and breathless, had forced their way out through the disorderly throng, they saw, in the distance, above the encircling crowds, the shining helmets, swaying and undulating as they gradually moved farther and farther away. Hands, hats, walking-sticks, and umbrellas could be seen, now uplifted and then lowered.

The two followed on, in extreme anxiety, but they were not so fortunate as to get close by. They saw the red, angry faces of men and women, and heard the shouts of, "Orange forever!" and "Kill him!" At last, to their relief, they saw approaching a long file of policemen, who forced their way through the crowd. The people now pressed closely about the entrance to a narrow alley in which was the police-station.

Then Johannes saw a man take up a large iron ash-can that stood on a stoop at the corner of the alley, and toss it so that it came down in the middle of the clamoring crowd where Markus was. A great cloud of yellow-white ashes flew from it, and the rabble laughed and cheered. The police cleared the alley, and the mob slowly scattered, with the triumphant shout: "Orange forever!"

When Johannes peered into the alley, between the policemen who would not let him through, he saw Markus — no longer walking, but only an inert body under the weight of which the firemen were moving with shuffling feet.

Marjon and Johannes waited patiently during what seemed an hour. It might have been only fifteen minutes. Then they obtained permission to pass through, and to see their brother in the station-house.

When questioned, an officer, who was sitting at the entrance, pointed over his shoulder with his pipe-stem to a dark corner.

There, upon the wooden floor, unconscious, lay Markus. His clothing was torn to rags; his hair, his beard, his eyebrows and lashes, were white with ashes; and over all were dark red clots and streaks of coagulated blood. He breathed heavily and painfully. There was no one close beside him, and he lay unwashed and uncared for, with the rope still around his wrists.

Johannes and Marjon asked for water, but were not permitted to do anything. They had to wait until the municipal doctor came. Tightly clasping each other's hand, they waited, watching their friend. At last the doctor came, and cut away the rope. It was not a mortal hurt, he said.

They saw the ambulance, with its white awning come, and saw Markus laid therein. Then, hand in hand, they walked behind to the door of the hospital, without speaking a word.

That evening there were great rejoicings and brilliant illuminations in all the towns and villages of the dear Netherlands.

Everywhere there were flaming torches and exploding fireworks, and on all sides rang strains of "Wilhelmus!" and "Orange forever!"

The King and Queen were glad when at last the day was ended.

XXII

JOHANNES and Marjon both held out bravely until night, doing their daily work as well as they could, and telling briefly, to the few faithful friends of Markus, what had occurred.

But when the lonesome night was come, and they were about to part for several hours, Johannes said:

"No, do not go away from me! How can I endure it — alone with my thoughts — without you!"

They were in the little kitchen where Marjon slept. A small lamp, without a shade, stood burning on the table beside an untidy coffee-set.

When Johannes said this, Marjon looked at him with puzzled, half-closed eyes, as if she did not understand and was trying to think it out. Then she threw herself forward upon her pillow, her face in her hands, and began to cry piteously.

At that Johannes also broke down, and kneeling beside her poor, rickety little iron bed, he cried with her like one in desperation.

Then said Johannes: "What shall we do without him, Marjon?"

Marjon made no reply.

"Do you remember that he said he should soon go away from us?"

"If only I could nurse him," she said.

"Is he going to die?" asked Johannes.

"He can die as well as we. Is he not flesh and blood?"

"He will never really die, though."

"Nor will we, Jo. But what does that avail us? I can't do without him."

And she sobbed again, hopelessly.

"Perhaps it is not so bad," said Johannes. "We will call in the morning, and they surely will let us see him."

And so they talked on for a time. Then Johannes said:

"Let me stay with you, Marjon. It really seems as if I never again could go away from you."

Marjon looked at him through her tears, and even smiled.

"But, Jo, we cannot do as we used to. We are no longer children. I am already eighteen, and are you not that also?"

"Then let us become husband and wife, so that we can remain together," said Johannes.

"Then you no longer love that other one more than me?"

"I think not, Marjon; for she would understand nothing of this, and certainly would not join us in our sorrow."

"But, dear boy, we are far too young to become husband and wife."

"I do not understand, Marjon. First you find us too old to stay together, and then you find us too young. And yet I want to remain with you. How can it be done?"

"Listen, Jo. Formerly you said to me, 'No foolishness,' and that hurt me for I cared much more for you than you did for me. Why were you never more kind to me then?"

"Because I was forced to remember that ugly, dark woman, your sister. I cannot bear the thought of her."

Marjon reflected a while, and then said:

"But that is no reason for you to be hard toward me, Jo. I am not low, like her."

Johannes was silent. Then she resumed:

"But then I know what, Jo: you may stay here. But now I shall say 'No foolishness,' and remain unyielding until you shall have forgotten that ugly woman. Will that do?"

"Yes, Marjon," replied Johannes. Then a pillow and some covering were given him, and he lay on the hard floor of the little kitchen the entire night. And now and then, as one of them became aware that the other was still awake, they would talk together, softly, about their poor friend, each trying to comfort the other.

And thus it happened, as I told you it would, that, before the ending of the book, they became husband and wife.

But when Johannes forgot the ugly, dark woman Marjon's sister I do not tell you; for that does not concern others.

XXIII

THE humble little kitchen, in the first pale, glimmering light that passed through the unwashed, uncurtained window; two rush-bottomed chairs; the unpainted table with the oil-lamp and the untidy coffee-set; Marjon's narrow iron bed, which quaked if she merely stirred; her breathing, now deep and regular, for at last she slept; the first chirping of the sparrows out-of-doors; continually before Johannes' mental vision the pale face of his kind Brother, befouled with blood and ashes; in his ears the powerful voice resounding through the arches of the church; the howling of the mob; and then — his own body, stiff and sore, on the hard, wooden boards. . . .

Then, all at once, light! Bright, golden sunlight, a mild, refreshingly fragrant air, all pain away, an elastic, feather-light body — and the majestic sound of the sea.

Where was he? Where — where!

Oh, he knew; he felt in himself where he was.

He recognized the feeling of self-consciousness, although he had not recalled his surroundings.

But he heard the ocean — heard it roaring grandly as only it roars on a level, sandy coast; and he heard the whistling of wind in the rushes. And he watched the play of the grey-green waves as they came rolling in — their long lines of shining breakers crested with combing white, dashing and splashing and foaming over the flat stretches of sand.

He had seen it all for years, and every day it was the same, from age to age.

And when he glanced round to see if his little friend Wistik, whom he hoped to find, was also here, he saw, close beside him, a bright little figure sitting quite still and gazing out over the sea.

It was not Wistik. No, for this one had the large, gauzy

wings of a dragon-fly, and a little mantle of delicate blue waving gently in the sea-breeze.

"Windekind!" exclaimed Johannes.

Then the bright being looked at him, and he recognized the dear, enigmatical eyes, and the exquisite hair — a bloom-like blonde like the mere sheen of gold — with its flower-crown of green and white.

"Here we are again," said Windekind.

"Then did you not die with Father Pan?" asked Johannes, in astonishment.

"I live forever," said Windekind.

Johannes thought this over. He was tranquil again, as he always was here. Life, so rude and painful, seemed now very far away. He felt only calmness and contentment, although he well knew that his body still lay on the hard floor.

Then he asked, "Does not that bore you?"

Windekind laughed, and held out in front of him his flower, which he used as a staff. It was not an iris, but a strange, splendid blossom — a lily or an orchid — blue, striped with white and gold.

"Silly boy!" said he. "To be bored is to be no longer able to enjoy anything. I am not a human being, that gets bored after a few years. I am not weary of happiness."

"Never?" asked Johannes.

"That I do not know," answered Windekind; "but not yet. If life were to bore me, then I should die and return to my Father. He can never grow weary."

"And have you grown still wiser?"

Windekind looked tenderly and very seriously at Johannes.

"Do you see my flower?" he asked. "This is not my old iris. This is much more beautiful. Oh, Mother Earth is greatly changed; and so am I."

Johannes looked about him. But everything appeared as before: the long lines of delicate green dunes; the sky, all mottled with white clouds; the graceful sea-gulls rocking in the wind, with their cry of grand and lonely liberty. But on

the water not a sail was to be seen, nor on the strand a person.

"How good it is to see you again," said Johannes. "I have been so sorry about Father Pan. And now I am very anxious about my poor Brother."

But as Johannes said this he felt quite calm and peaceful; and this puzzled him.

Windekind looked at him, and smiled mysteriously.

"That was a long time ago," he said.

And when Johannes gazed at him in amazement, he repeated:

"Long ago — quite a thousand years."

"A thousand years?" murmured Johannes, mistrustfully.

"Yes, truly a thousand years," said Windekind, positively.

"I have grown old, although you cannot see it in me. But the longer those of my race live, the younger they grow, in nature and appearance. Learn that yourself, Johannes — it is well to. I have grown stronger with the centuries, and more elastic — wiser and more loving. That's the way. I have not now an enemy upon earth. I have made up with that small goblin Wistik. He is a right good fellow, after all."

"Is he not?" exclaimed Johannes, delighted. "I too have noticed that."

"Yes," said Windekind, "when he has a leader. I have also become reconciled to human beings."

"Oh, splendid, splendid!" cried Johannes. "I know who has done that!"

"Right!" said Windekind, nodding. "Your good Brother did it."

Then Johannes saw great numbers of sea-gulls flocking together from all sides, wheeling and screaming because of something in the distance that was drawing nearer from out over the sea. It was like a large bird soaring on vast, silently outspread wings. The fierce sunlight fell upon it, making it flash like burnished gold, or like some shining metal. As it came nearer Johannes saw that it had the pretty colors of a

swallow, steel-blue, brown and white, but with gilded beak and claws, and that long, variegated feathers, or ribbons, were streaming out behind, because of its rapid flight. The exquisite white of the circling, screaming sea-gulls was in sharp contrast with the huge, dark-colored hulk. A soft, clear sound came from above, as of clinking glass attuned like bells.

"What is that immense creature?" asked Johannes; for the shadow of it moved over the sea like that of a cloud.

"That is not a creature," replied Windekind. "There are human beings in it, but they are not at all ugly now, nor ridiculous. Only look!"

And Johannes saw, from its immobility, that it was not a bird, but a colossal air-ship in the form of a bird. And also he could see, clearly, that lightly dressed figures were moving to and fro along the decks, tossing crumbs to the sea-gulls that, fluttering, and crying caught them up.

Then the great shining wings altered their course, and with a graceful movement the colossus dipped gently downward, skimming the level sandy beach for the distance of a hundred yards.

At last it was still, and Johannes could admire the splendid structure: the glittering gold, the gleaming steel-blue decorations, and the bright-hued banners and pennants with gold-lettered mottoes that fluttered in the breeze.

"Climb up," cried Windekind, "it is going away again. It will not stay a great while."

"Are you going along?" asked Johannes.

"Yes," replied Windekind. "I am at home with these people. But remember they cannot see us yet, any more than could those a thousand years ago. They are still only human beings."

Johannes, his hand in Windekind's, floated up to the air-ship, and nestled in the golden crown upon the head of the bird. Secluded there, they could see what the people were doing.

The people were strong and handsome, like those in the

realms of Father Pan; but their hair was darker, and their faces, with thoughtful eyes, were more earnest. And they all resembled Johannes' Brother — as if they were all one large family, and akin to him.

The garments of all of them were much alike — exceedingly simple. They were of unfigured material, similar to linen, with the pretty, sober coloring of some birds — the wood-dove and the peregrine; and all were bordered with fine, bright-colored embroidery. Almost without exception the passengers carried flowers. And festoons of flowers hung in every part of the ship; but these were wilted, and diffused the sweet, keen fragrance of roses.

All went with heads uncovered, and their waving hair was thick, but not long. There was little to distinguish the dress of the men from that of the women; but the men all wore full beards, and the women braids of hair wound about their heads.

Now, leaving their vessel for a short time, they raced along the beach, laughing merrily, and glad of the exercise. Johannes saw that they wore sandals — just like the man in brown at Roodhuis'; and he had to laugh at the recollection. The younger ones were barefooted.

After they had bathed and played, they climbed into the ship again; and, taking their places, all facing the sea, they sang a song. Although Johannes did not understand the words, he knew the meaning of them. It sounded like a psalm, but was more fine and earnest than any he had ever heard.

"That is the song of thanks they always sing after a safe passage over the great water," said Windekind. "Yes, they mean it, for they all know the Father. See how they mean it."

And Johannes saw the deep emotion in their earnest faces, and the tears that glistened beneath the eyes of the younger women. And he heard the quiver of feeling in their full, pure voices.

Then the magnificent great bird, with a strange clatter of unfolding wings, with the whirring of unseen wheels, and the klink-klank of glass bells, rose slowly, and pointed its golden beak and its fixed, crystal eyes toward the land.

"But how does it move?" asked Johannes.

"Could you have explained to your forefathers how an electric vehicle of your own time was propelled?" asked Windekind. "Then do not ask that question, but rather, take a look at your native country, and see how beautiful it has become."

The long line of coast was visible as they ascended, and Johannes could see extending into the ocean at regular distances great dikes of dark-grey stone, over which the white foam of the waves was splashing.

"They are not handsome, but necessary," said Windekind. "But here are our dunes."

And behold! They were as fair and free as in the olden days — a wide, open wilderness without hedge or fence, without shavings or paper. The hollows were full of little green groves; and there the white hawthorn blossomed, and the singing of hundreds of nightingales ascended to their high position. Johannes saw, as of old, the little white tails of thousands of rabbits, flipping over the grey-green stretches of moss. And also he saw people — sometimes by twos or threes, then in large groups. But they did not disturb the harmony of the peaceful scene, and their delicate grey, soft brown, and subdued green clothing was quite in keeping with the tender tints of the landscape.

After that came the verdant country. And how excited Johannes was when, in his flight, he saw it looking like one great, flowery, tree-filled park!

The bright green fields were there, the straight ditches and canals; but everywhere were trees. Sometimes they stood alone — mighty giants casting broad shadows; sometimes in great forests, each one vast expanse of foliage, cool and rustling, where the wood-doves cooed, and golden thrushes

whistled. Gorgeous blossoms and thickly flowered shrubs, such as Johannes had seen only in gardens, were everywhere — growing wild in such masses that, from above, they sometimes looked like carpets of glowing red or deepest blue.

And the small white houses of the people, looking as if some giant had sawed them out with supple hand, were dotted about in the midst of the verdure and flowers. But on the borders of the water, by lakes and rivers and canals, were they strewn most thickly. The shining blue waters appeared to be the magnet which had attracted the little square blocks.

"You see, indeed, Johannes," said Windekind, "it was their own fault that human beings seemed out of place in Nature. They had no reverence for her, and harmed her in their stupidity. They have now learned from Nature how beautiful and like unto her they themselves may be, and they have made friends with her. They have taught their children, from their earliest infancy, to do no needless damage to flower or leaf, and to kill no creature ruthlessly; taught them also to desire to be worthy of their place in the midst of all those beautiful and charming objects. Sacred reverence for all that is beautiful, and for everything that has life, is now strictly enjoined. Thus is peace preserved between man and Nature, and they live in intimate relations, neither annoying the other."

"But, Windekind, where are the cities? I see only scattered houses and churches. And where are the iron railways and their sooty stations? And where are the factories, with their tall chimneys and dirty smoke?"

"My dear Johannes, ought ugly things to be retained any longer than extreme need for them demands?"

"Are not, then, railroads and cities and factories necessities?"

"There are still factories, but they do not have to be ugly. There they are — finer than many palaces of a thousand years ago. And why tracks of iron, when the broad ways of the air are open and free to all? And why swarm in cramped quarters, high over one another, so long as there is dwelling-room

amid the flowers and the verdure? Men were not so stupid but that they found a way to dispense with all that ugliness, and to drive their engines without the burning of dusty, deeply buried coal. But still some roads remain. Look!"

And Johannes saw that all the dwellings were connected by roads — some of them fourfold and broad, of a dark russet color; others like narrow white ribbons winding through the grass from house to house. And people were passing over them, afoot, or in small, swiftly moving vehicles.

"It is a holiday," said Windekind. "Such days are now really happy and holy days, without the deadly dreariness of the former ones."

Everywhere Johannes saw little churches having pointed spires in the old Dutch style; but now they were full of statuary and ornament. The doors stood open, and people were passing through. And now Johannes heard the sound of music coming out of those little churches — as pure and as fine as the best he had ever heard.

"Oh, Windekind, how I should love to go in and listen to that splendid music! I do so want to," said Johannes.

But Windekind put his finger to his lips, and said:

"Hush! We are going to hear still better. Our voyagers are going to a much larger church, where most beautiful music can be heard. They are pilgrims, such as go from all countries every year, at this time, to celebrate the great festival."

"Do I not see another air-ship, Windekind? And there — still another?" asked Johannes.

"Yes; perhaps, indeed, one may be going along with us," said Windekind. "That will make it lively."

And very soon there actually came a second air-ship — a big brother-bird, that flew up to them. Then the flags dipped, and wide dark-blue banners, bearing silver-lettered mottoes, were unfurled to the breeze. The people waved, and shouted aloud. And when the twin birds were so close together that the tips of their great bright wings nearly touched, the people

on Johannes' ship struck up an anthem — a full and powerful song — that was immediately responded to by an antistrophe from the other ship. And thus they took turns, first one, then the other, for quite a time.

Johannes' heart was warmed by this sweet understanding among peoples wholly unknown to one another.

"Do all men now speak the same language?" he asked his friend.

"Do you not hear what they are singing? All people have chosen that language as the most beautiful and the most natural. It is Greek."

"I do not know Greek," said Johannes, regretfully.

"But just look at that pennant, then, on the other ship. What does it say?"

"That is Dutch, Windekind — ordinary Dutch," cried Johannes. And he read: "*There is no Death,*" and "*Gladness only endures.*" And he also read the name of the ship, "*The Heron.*"

Then his own ship dropped down again, upon a level meadow close beside some large buildings of grey freestone, charmingly sculptured, and there, for some mysterious reason, the vessel lay a long while — to get up power, thought Johannes. And the pilgrims took advantage of the delay to dance over the meadows with graceful steps, and also to replace with fresh flowers the wilted festoons.

Then they rose again, and whizzed through the still, summer air toward the south. Johannes noticed that not much more than half the land was devoted to field and orchard and vegetable-garden, and that all the rest was forest and park and flower-garden; that there were no hedges nor fences, nor any walls, except those against which grapes and peaches were growing. He did indeed still see brown and white sails on lake and river — that beautiful and ever charming spectacle — but there were no more of the tall four-armed windmills. And that was a pity.

"One cannot demand everything," said Windekind.

Johannes saw colossal wheels, like anchored paddle-wheels, glistening in the sunlight — turning constantly, and moved by some mysterious force. That certainly was better than smoking chimneys.

And nowhere was it dirty, nowhere was there wan poverty, nowhere the deathly ugliness and monotonous melancholy of the cities. He saw no ragged nor wretched people, no unsightly regions of refuse and lumber. In the places where he knew the cities to have been, there were now verdant tracts vocal with the songs of birds, and fruitful, well-tilled fields and gardens.

"The housekeeping of the world is revolutionized, dear Johannes," said Windekind. "It lasted quite a while, and cost considerable bickering; but that is all over now, and everything is according to method. I myself take real pleasure in it."

And from his golden seat he gazed over the country, like a tiny pretty king, who, proud and well-satisfied, rules his domain with a floral sceptre.

"Watch, now: we are going higher. We have to fly over the mountains."

And the ship rose until the people below were no longer visible, and at last even the houses disappeared. It grew chilly as they cut through the white mists of the great clouds; and, as of old, Windekind threw his little blue mantle about Johannes. Thus they went on for hours, in fog and mist, and the mighty vessel quivered with the speed of its flight. The voyagers were still, and stayed, snug and safe, inside. On they rushed, through rain and through snow, catching occasional glimpses of wide tempestuous landscapes, with green fields, foaming rivers, snow-capped mountains, glaciers, and lakes of gleaming blue.

"Is the whole world as beautiful now, and as well cared for, as my own country?" asked Johannes.

"The work of men is never complete," replied Windekind, "and that is good for them, else they would become too proud."

Asia and Africa are a long way yet from being in trim, possibly they never will be. But then it is all very well as it is — very well. A thousand years ago one could not have said that."

How long they had been speeding thus, Johannes could not say. It seemed to him many hours. Then the great billows of cloud grew more and more transparent, and again the green land beneath them became visible, and also a deep, deep blue sea.

"Is it Italy?" asked Johannes. Windekind nodded, and Johannes hoped they would stay still a while so that he might see the beautiful country of which the priest had told him. Then the ship descended until people and houses could again be distinguished, and Johannes saw a scene so grand, so rich, so overwhelming, that he was startled and almost speechless. He could only say, thinking of Marjon, "Oh, how shall I describe all this?"

For the scene was exhibited with a fulness and variety that left no time for close observation. It was a landscape and a world-city in one — an extraordinary valley, down which the vessel now drifted, full of trees, verdure, flowers, buildings, statues, and people. Just before him he saw a gigantic azalea-tree covered with red flowers; farther on, a long arcade, overgrown with ivy, extending down to the foot of the vale. Then a temple with tall, slender, white pillars, also overgrown with ivy. In the middle of the valley stood a colossal piece of sculpture — simply a head. Johannes saw the sun shining upon it. And farther on there were structures unending, and thousands and thousands of people. Altogether, it gave him an impression of happiness and of beauty indescribable. Johannes could only cry, "How splendid! How splendid!" doing his utmost to take in everything, that he might remember and describe it to Marjon. But he felt that it would be beyond his powers, and so deeply moved was he by the beauty of the scene that he cried out, "It is too glorious! I cannot

bear it!" And he wondered if the ship was going to stop there.

It did not stop, but floated farther on — not far now from the ground — and followed the rocky coast. Johannes remembered the red rocks and the coast where he and Wistik had sat when the Devil appeared. This country, also, looked well-tilled and inhabited, after the manner of his own country.

Then they put out again, over the blue, deep sea, and observed how it was navigated by large, swift vessels, without either sail or steam. They seemed to glide over the water as sledges over the snow, and the white foam flew high up over the bows.

Then after a long voyage there loomed from the sea, like a violet shadow, a large island; and, although it was broad daylight, it seemed as if above that island a bright yellow-white star were sparkling.

"That is our goal," said Windekind. "Take heed, now, you are going to see something fine."

And when they came nearer, Johannes could not tell what it was: whether the island was Nature's work, or some marvel wrought by the hand of man.

For that whole great island, that from a distance had looked like a mountain, appeared, when approached, to be entirely covered with buildings — a piling up of pillars and roofs that soared one above another, and converged to an awe-inspiring dome. That crowning dome sparkled in the clear, sunlit air like an arrested cloud — with the silvery, light green, and dark blue splendor of a glacier covered with thousands of beautifully sculptured, inverted icicles; and upon the top shone the yellow-white light which, even in broad daylight, seemed to be a star.

So immense and so numerous were the structures, that one could not tell what the natural form of the island had been, nor what had been made by human hands.

Coming still nearer, one could see green masses of foliage filling all the spaces between the buildings, up to the very top. The whole island seemed a miracle of art and nature; of columns of pure white, of silver and silver-blue; of cupolas, bronze-green or golden; while amidst them all was the dark green of the dense groves and the shrubbery, above which rose the tufted palms on their slender, slightly curved stems.

"Oh, Windekind," cried Johannes, "is this a story?"

"This is a story," said Windekind, "as fine as any I ever told you. But this one is true. Human beings first heard of it through me, and then they resolved to build it as soon as they could find time, and housekeeping was systematized. It could have been somewhat finer, but still it came out very nicely, especially when you reflect that they have had merely a hundred years in which to work out the plan; considering, also, that, when half completed, an earthquake destroyed it."

"What is it that glitters on that high dome at the summit of the island? It looks like a distant star. Is it fire?"

"That is not fire, Johannes, but metal — a golden flame. It is a piece of gilded metal, that always glows in the sunlight as if it were burning. By means of that flame the people wish to indicate their ardent love."

"Love for whom, Windekind — for one another, or for God?"

"They know no difference, Johannes," said Windekind.

With radiant faces the pilgrims stood gazing at the spectacle; and, shouting their joy, they sang again. Only a few of the older ones appeared to have seen the island before.

The sea was now covered with large white vessels speeding to and fro, and one could also see air-ships flying thither from all points of the compass, like herons to their nesting-place.

Then Johannes' vessel settled down upon a great grassy plain close to the shore, and the pilgrims alighted. They were embarrassed and bewildered now by all that surrounded them — by the multitude of air-ships, and also by the people, among whom they felt shy and strange.

Hundreds of these ships were now at rest — a brilliant spectacle, all differently rigged and adorned, and patterned after various birds. There were hawks and eagles, and giant beetles, entirely of bronze, looking like gold. There were moths of green-reflecting metal; and dragon-flies with wings of iridescent glass; wasps with bodies ringed with black and yellow; butterflies having enormous yellow wings, marked with peacock-eyes of blue, from which long pennants, black and red, streamed out behind.

There was now considerable commotion throughout the grassy plain, among those who, just arrived, were trying to find their way.

On the coast, around the whole island, was an almost unbroken series of cool terraces beneath white colonnades shaded by the light lavender flowers of the *glycine*; and behind them were small, white-stuccoed recesses overlooking the sea. There the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who annually came to the feast were lodged and fed.

Johannes saw them sitting at long tables on which were bread, fruit, and flowers. And above the sound of the foaming surf, as the crystalline blue water broke in white spray over the dull red rocks, cheerful talking and laughing could be heard, and also the music of guitars.

Higher up, the island was clear and open. Here were sunny parks with low flowering shrubs, and now and then a tall palm, and everywhere temples and buildings for various purposes.

With his hand in Windekind's, Johannes glided over this, unable to note all of the many things that met his gaze. He saw, beneath him, close to the shore, large arenas for the games and the races; also long buildings, with thousands of columns, for the display of useful and ingenious articles and implements.

A little higher were gardens with plants and animals, museums, observatories, immense libraries, and covered colonnades and assembly-rooms for scholars. After that came theatres, in Hellenic form — semicircular — with white

marble seats. And every place was thronged with people, in their tasteful, charming dress. The brown and the yellow races were represented; also the very dark-colored ones, with their flashing eyes, haughty bearing, and vigorous frames. These wore brightly-colored silken garments, green and red, embroidered with gold; but all who were white or fair were soberly clad in soft, refined colors.

Still higher were collections of statues, marble and gilded — many of them outside in the park, among the flowers, the aloes, and the plashing fountains; others, beneath long porticoes; and in large, low buildings there were sketches and paintings, or statuettes wrought in metal or carved in wood.

Finally, still higher up the incline, close beside the great middle temple which was the crown of the island, surrounded by the serious silences of dark laurel and myrtle groves, were the temples of music.

There was a variety of them. Some were lighter and more ornamental — of brighter stone, and with steep, golden roofs; others, massive and strong, of quiet grey limestone, with green and red granite pillars, and arched roofs of bronze.

Windekind pointed out that each temple was dedicated exclusively to one composer; and Johannes heard with joy names that were well known to him in his own day.

"Which one shall we choose?" asked Windekind. "Nowhere else upon earth can their works be heard as in any one of these temples."

While he hesitated, with the name Beethoven on his lips, Johannes saw coming over the grassy path between the rose-colored flowering oleanders, a group of five majestic persons. They were tall, powerful figures — four men and a woman. The men were all elderly, one of them having silver-white, the others thick grey hair. The woman was younger, and indescribably noble and beautiful. They each wore a mantle of the same amaranthine red, and upon the head a small wreath of green myrtle, and each one held a flower.

They walked slowly and with dignity, and wherever they

went the people all greeted them. Those who had been chatting were respectfully silent; those sitting or lying down stood up; and those who were in their path hastily stepped aside.

"Who are those five people, Windekind?"

"They are the five kings. Do you not see that they carry my flower in their hands? It is the blue, white, and gold Lily of the Kings, which the people have evolved. Formerly it did not exist. These are the noblest, wisest, strongest, the purest and most worthy among human beings. In them are united, in most perfect harmony, all of the human faculties. They are poets, masters of speech, and sages, that purify and elevate morals. They are regulators of labor, directors in business, in taste, and in science. Not all are equally excellent, nor are there always so many. The best are sought for and elevated. But they bear no rank — they have no court, no palace, no army, no realm. Their throne is where they seat themselves; their kingdom is the whole world. Their power consists in the beauty of their words, in their wisdom, and in the love of their fellowmen. See how they are revered! Look at those adoring women — doing obeisance as ever. There are still the very same foolish ones among the young women."

And Windekind called Johannes' attention to the fair enthusiasts who attempted not only to kiss the hands of the Five, but also to touch them with their flowers, which, thereby made sacred as relics, were later to be cherished as mementoes. But the sages smilingly motioned these aside, and entered the largest of the music-temples — a mighty structure of smooth, cream-white marble, without ornament, but pure in line, and nobly harmonious in its proportions. It was round in form, having a bronze roof without side-windows, and lighted only from above. Over the entrance, in large gold letters, was the name "Bach." * When the Five came in all the people stood up, and waited until they were seated in the chairs reserved for them.

And then Johannes heard exceedingly fine music. And Windekind said, "This fountain is not yet exhausted, nor will it be for ages to come."

* See note, page 520.

When they were again out-of-doors, and Johannes saw the happiness of all those beautiful people, and the mood of solemn devotion into which the music had put them, he suddenly became depressed, and said: "Oh, Windekind, now that I have seen all this, and know what it is possible for people to be if only they are wise and good, what avails it all when I have to return to that pitiful land of ugliness and folly and injustice? And, alas, of what advantage is it to all those poor people who are perhaps preparing for this lovely life, but who yet are never to see it?"

Johannes looked imploringly at his friend, who was silently meditating while they slowly drifted still higher along a dense grove of dark laurel, through which the happy, high spirited people were proceeding to the great, the loftiest temple.

Said Windekind: "You do not yet comprehend the unity of life, Johannes. However beautiful all this appears to you, it is only a short step in advance. These are yet, and will continue to be, human beings—subject to illness and death, to quarrels and misunderstandings, to superstition and injustice. All that now seems to you elevated and marvelous is but a wisp of straw compared with the magnificence of the Father to whom we all return. The victory is not here, but higher. And whoever has made preparation, however humble, shall have his rightful part in the final triumph."

Johannes did not fully understand, but eagerly drank in the comfort of these mysterious words. Still musing upon them, he stepped out of the dark, leafy woods upon an extraordinary plain, and saw before him the great middle temple that formed the summit of the island.

The sight of it was overwhelming, for it was almost frightfully and oppressively grand; and he saw all the oncoming people stop, as though turned to stone. None ventured to speak unless in whispers.

The plain was so large that those who had just reached the border of the woods could not distinguish the hands nor the heads of those who were entering the temple. The plain was

utterly bare — upon it was neither plant nor statue. It was the leveled top of the natural rock — a reddish-grey granite, smoothly polished, and rising gradually by low flights of steps each twelve paces wide and one foot high.

The base of the temple was sombrely grand. Its shape was oblong, the greatest length being from north to south, showing an endless series of massive lotus-columns, close together, and all of the same reddish-grey stone. The eye was bewildered by them, as if in a dark forest of pillars. The steady stream of dot-like human forms appeared to be engulfed in their shade.

These mighty columns, resting on straight and flat string-courses, supported a broad terrace that surrounded the entire temple. Upon this terrace was a layer of earth, whence sprang a luxuriant growth of trees and shrubs, wide-spreading sycamores, towering cypresses, and slender palms — all overgrown and bound together by a veil of flowers and leafy vines.

Then succeeded, higher up, a second series of pillars, supporting another terrace covered with smaller shrubs. And above that, still a third, whose columns were of brighter stone — light-green and grey. The topmost row was of pure white, against which the green of the plants was in clear relief.

And above these, delicate and daring, soared a convergence of groinings, with a maze of exquisite spires and pinnacles, resembling a forest of stalagmites. Together they formed an oval whose chief colors — steel-blue, dark and sparkling, light-grey, and silver — resembled a cloud or a glacier; yet all harmoniously fashioned by human hands. Above, on a colossal tripod, glowed the emblem of love and life — the Golden Flame!

Although thousands of people from every side were ceaselessly pouring into the temple, and disappearing amid the dark columns, it was very still there — so still that above the sound of moving feet one could distinctly hear the babbling of

the brooks that, coursing through the verdant terraces, flowed thence to the four corners of the plain.

Johannes tried to follow the soft speech of the people, but he did not understand the language. Then Windekind, calling his attention to a trio of persons—a vigorous father about fifty years of age, and his two sons, slender, fine fellows not far from twenty—said, “Listen to them!” It was Dutch they were speaking—pure, mellifluous Dutch.

The father said: “Look, Gerbrand; the lowest columns are so large that ten men could not encircle them. But within the temple, in the great oval centre, there are a hundred columns, far larger, that reach to the floor of the third terrace. On the groined arches resting upon those columns stand twice as many smaller pillars, which, rising somewhat higher than the gallery of the third terrace, are attached thereto by a system of buttresses. On these two hundred smaller pillars rests the enormous middle dome which over-arches the oval hall. The dome is entirely of metal. The dark blue is steel; the grey, aluminum; the bright green, bronze. The pinnacles, arches, and ornamentations are all of silver or silver-plated steel. In the four corner-spaces, between square and oval, stand four towers, having small gold-covered cupolas. Within these, elevators move up and down, and through them the water also is raised for the terraces.

“The tall tripod at the top of the dome is of bronze, and the flame is gilded bronze. The flame itself is twelve metres long, and its tip is a hundred and eighty metres above the plain.”

Gerbrand, the younger son, knitting his brows as he regarded the awe-inspiring spectacle, asked: “How many people have worked upon it, father?”

“Oh, more than a hundred thousand, for nearly a century. But if the temple should again collapse, as once it did, ten times as many more would eagerly come, to rebuild it in less than half that time.”

Drawing nearer, Johannes discerned, on the stone band

beneath the first terrace, colossal silver letters, in plain Roman form. On the front a portion of a proverb was legible. The rest of it probably ran around the entire temple. Johannes retained the majestic tenor of it, although he did not comprehend the full meaning. Facing him was:

REDEUNT SATURNIA REGNA

and on the eastern side he read the first words,

IAM NOVA PROGENIËS . . .

This was all he could distinguish.

They entered the forest of columns, and Johannes continued to follow the trio closely. Through the solemn semi-darkness all pressed gently on toward the steps that led to the higher terraces.

On the second terrace stood thousands of statues, representing the great and famous of all the ages. Johannes was delighted to hear what the sons and their father said about them. They seemed best acquainted with the composers, then with the dramatic poets, the sculptors, the painters, and the scholars. They were most at a loss concerning the statesmen.

Gerbrand said, "Here is a warrior, father — Bismarck is his name. When did he live, and what did he do?"

Then the father said to his elder son, "Do you not know when Bismarck lived, and what he did, Hugo?"

Hugo replied, "I think he lived in Bach's time, father; but what he did I do not know."

"Yes, he lived about the time of Bach, or rather, that of Brahms. He created the German Empire."

Said Gerbrand, "The German Empire, father! Where is that?"

"There is no longer a German Empire, Gerbrand, although there are millions of Germans. Such empires do not now exist; but in that day they were thought to be something very admirable."

And Hugo: "Was it as fine as the Chromatic Fantasia, father, or the Pyramids?"

"It was something very different, my boy, but certainly not so fine, for it was less lasting."

On the third and highest terrace, beneath the loftiest of the white marble columns, and running around the entire temple, was a frieze, sculptured in bas-relief. Upon it were groups of figures, cut with most wonderful art, giving representative scenes from the whole history of mankind. Among them, the spectacle of the battles held the youths the longest.

"Look, father! Here again is a man being killed. Why was that? What harm did he do?"

"That is Pertinax," replied the father, "a king of Rome, killed by his soldiers because he was just."

"A man killed for being just! What strange people!" said Hugo, smiling.

"They killed Socrates also, because he was wise, did they not, father? We saw that a little while ago," said Gerbrand.

"Yes, Gerbrand," said Hugo; "but indeed they also fought for good reasons, did they not, father? Socrates himself fought, and Sophocles."

"And Æschylus," added the father. "He lost his hand at Marathon. And Dante fought, and so did Byron."

"Shelley too, father?" asked Hugo.

"No, my boy."

"But, father," asked Gerbrand, "when is it right to fight, and when is it not?"

"It is right, my boys, when that which is the dearest and most sacred must be protected from attack — whatever is dearer to us than our lives. That is what Æschylus and Socrates and Dante conceived to be their duty. They fought for freedom — the greatest freedom of their time. And should any beings come now and try to attack what we term our liberty and our rights, we also would fight for them."

"I wish that would happen," said Gerbrand. And the others laughed.

"Did Beethoven fight, father?" asked Hugo.

"No, although his life, as well as that of Shelley, was a struggle in the cause of true liberty — at least for what he held to be true liberty."

"But Beethoven wore a high, black hat, did he not, father? And Bach had his hair cut off, and wore a wig," said Gerbrand.

"Mozart also," added Hugo. "I do not understand how kings could do such queer things."

"How was it possible," exclaimed Gerbrand, "for these people in their high hats and silly black clothes to look at one another and not burst out laughing?"

"My dear boys," said the father, "there is not a thing so foolish, so ugly, or so bad, but even the best of men will do it, or tolerate it, if only many take part in it, and it is a common error of their time. But that was a very queer age. At the time such great and wise kings as Goethe, Shelley, and Beethoven lived, ninety out of every hundred men lived like the very beasts. Some never bathed their entire bodies. . . "

"*Think* of it!" cried the youths.

"They wore soiled, hideous clothing, were rude and ill-mannered, and had no conception of music nor of poetry."

"How could that be?" exclaimed the two young men.

"Because it was thought that the best human living was possible for only an occasional exception — for one in a hundred, or one in a thousand. You think that very stupid, do you not? But at that time everybody felt so, even the kings."

"Not Shelley, though," exclaimed Hugo.

"No, not Shelley," said the father. "But it is now nearly noon. We must not miss the Hall of the Hundred Pillars. We agreed to go there, you remember, while we were still at home with mother and the children."

The halls were decorated with inscriptions in many lan-

guages — each with its own ornate characters. Johannes recognized Sanskrit, Chinese, Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek. He could read only a few of the sentences; but these he retained, without understanding them:

“IN LA SUA VOLONTADE E NOSTRA PACE,” and “MITE ET COGNATUM EST HOMINI DEUS.”

The Hall of the Hundred Pillars had entrances from all sides, on the same level, through the lowest and heaviest colonnades, and also along stairways descending from all the terraces. The floor of the hall looked like a vast, snow-covered plain, so white was the marble, and the astronomical figures with which it was inlaid were all of silver. The hundred pillars that gave the hall its name were of red granite, and supported the central dome, which, spanning the imposing space by arch on arch, stood like a miracle of art. There were no windows, but the light streamed in through the open arches, and past the white and light blue pillarets of the dome. Yet it was not possible, from below, to see the sky.

The hall was already filled with people — thousands upon thousands. Whispering softly, all pressed forward, and at last stood still in silent expectation. Johannes followed his fellow-countrymen.

“Look, boys,” whispered the father, “these pillars are of one piece — the largest stone columns in the world. In remote antiquity, when, also, men were able to build great structures, there were two like them in Rome; and we found another one, half hewn, on the coast of Corsica. Then we ourselves made ninety-seven others, and placed them all here, to the honor of God.”

“Father,” whispered Gerbrand, “surely we are now the happiest and the mightiest beings in the universe, are we not?”

But the father looked at him reprovingly, and said: “For shame, boy! We are only poor blind earth-worms, and all our happiness is misery, and all our magnificence is a sham,

compared with the splendor of the Truth. It is but a feeble glimmering of the reality. To express this, we come hither yearly; and it was to teach you this that I brought you with me. Look up, and read what is written there."

Johannes' eyes followed the direction of the upraised hand, and he saw a Greek proverb that ran around the dome in colossal letters of gold. As interpreted by the father of the two youths it read thus: "TO THE ONLY GOD, WHO ALONE IS THE TRUTH AND THE REAL EXISTENCE — OUR FATHER, WHOM WE LOVE WITH ALL OUR HEARTS AND ALL OUR UNDERSTANDING, AND FOR WHOSE SAKE WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS WE LOVE OURSELVES."

Then the man showed his children a gold figure, at the northern end of the hall, at which the eyes of all the people were now directed, and said:

"Notice! There is the number of the hour; but beneath, it says: '*There is neither hour nor time.*' Do you see? Remember that as long as you live. And now consider why we have come here to-day. For a few moments the sun stands at the summer solstice — its highest point. The temple is so built that just at that instant the sun's light comes through the opening in the dome and touches the golden figure of the hour. Then all of us — thousands on thousands from every region of the world — will again in song solemnly pledge ourselves to faithful love toward one another, and toward the Father of us all."

After this the boys were silent, gazing with all the people at the golden figure. And now that innumerable throng, in the whole, vast space, became as still as death — as still as some great forest before a storm, when not a leaf stirs.

Then, in mighty, resounding tones, a great bell began to strike the hour; while the people, all in the utmost suspense, counted the strokes. Before the last stroke fell, the golden figure burst into flame, in the bright light of the sun.

Then, in unison, without any pause, all joined in one mighty chorus, stately, solemn, and simple, that soared into the spa-

cious vault like a song of thanks and of promise in one — a renewal for the year to come of the bond of love between God and man.

And so strong and deep was their emotion that some sank to their knees as if overcome, while others rested head or hands upon the shoulders of those standing in front of them. But the greater number stood erect, and sang loudly and clearly, regarding the scene with bright, joyful, and spirited looks.

Johannes himself felt thankful and happy beyond words — like a child under his Father's blessing, in the heart of his home.

RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR ! ! ! went the alarm-clock on the black mantel-shelf above the Dutch oven in Marjon's small kitchen. The iron bed shuddered and creaked; and Marjon sprang up, with the sleepy, mechanical haste of one accustomed to begin work at dawn, to stop the alarm.

There stood the unpainted table, the oil-lamp, and the unwashed coffee-set, and Marjon began to put things in order.

And out from the stifling, dark alcove came, one by one, the seven children of Van Tijn — to wash themselves at the kitchen pump and to dry themselves with one and the same old hand-towel.

XXIV

ALREADY they had been twice to the hospital, on visitors' days — Wednesday and Saturday — but they had not been permitted to see Markus.

He still lay unconscious, and the doctor did not yet know whether an operation would be necessary.

And when Johannes implored that they might only look upon the face of their friend, to know if he was still alive, it availed nothing. Their acquaintance with Dr. Cijfer or with Professor Bommeldoos had no influence here. There was no disposition to be indulgent. The feeling of hostility toward his Brother was general, and permeated the humane, scientific atmosphere of the hospital to such an extent that Johannes also was received more coldly because he appeared to be a relative of this man. For not even doctors and nurses are exempt from the suspicion of being sensitive to the opinions of others.

The strain of their sorrow was so great that Johannes and Marjon each feared lest the other would be ill — they ate so little and looked so worn, and their cheeks, although never very round and blooming, grew so pale and sunken.

At last — at last, they might go, for their third call, and join the stream of callers on Wednesday afternoon, from two o'clock until four. Marjon carried some white and purple asters; Johannes, a bunch of grapes bought with money carefully saved, cent by cent.

Entering the ward, they looked in great anxiety over the two long rows of beds. They searched for the face they knew so well, but did not find it. Timidly, they made inquiry of the nurse who sat writing, in the middle of the ward, at a little table covered with bandages and remedies. Without reply-

ing, she pointed to a bed. Then they saw the dark eyes, turned toward them with a kind smile.

They had not recognized him, for his beard was gone, his head enveloped with wrappings, and his face covered with plasters.

He beckoned them, and extended his emaciated white hand. They flew to him.

Two young men stood beside his bed. They were students. One of them, who seemed to have just made an examination of Markus, was rather gross in appearance, and had a flushed, uneasy face. The perspiration stood in drops on his forehead. The other stood by, indifferently, his hands in his pockets.

"Have you got at it?" asked the latter.

"Confound it, no," replied the other, wiping his forehead with his sleeve. "It's a thundering complicated case. There's a fracture of the skull; but the paralysis I can't account for. It's a mean trick of Snijman's to pick out such a business for me, just to pester me. I'll be sure to fail in the examination."

"Come, come, old fellow, you're in a pet. It's a pretty little chance for you — one to brag about. Come to-night to the quiz, and go through the brain anatomy again with me. Bring your *Henle* along. I'll give you such a lift you'll astonish them, old man. But we must be off now, for it's visiting-day."

And, taking the arm of his comrade, who sighed and packed up his instruments, he led him out of the ward.

"What do you think of the way they have fixed me up, children?" asked Markus, cheerfully, as he took Marjon's flowers — with his left hand, because he could not move the other.

But neither Marjon nor Johannes could speak. They stood with trembling lips, swallowing back their tears. Then they sat down, one each side of the bed, and Marjon rested her forehead on his helpless hand.

Johannes held out to him the grapes, and tried to greet him in words; but he could not.

"Children," said Markus, gently, yet with a rebuke in his tones, "I notice that you cry altogether too much. Do you remember, Johannes, when you sat down in the street beside the scissors'-wheel, and how I reproved you? When one cries so readily, it looks as if the great sorrow of mankind were not felt. He who has once realized that, weeps no more over his own little troubles; for the greater grief should hold him bathed in tears, both day and night."

At these words the two controlled themselves in some degree, and Marjon said:

"But this is not a trifling thing that they have done to you."

"It is not a trifling thing that the world is so that, this could happen. *That* is frightful; but it remains equally frightful whether this befell me or not. And that it has been done to me, and I have submitted, is cause for joyfulness, not for weeping."

Then said Johannes:

"But, dear Markus, what has it availed, and what will be the good of it? No one is sorry for it. No one will ever perceive the significance of it. No one, at this instant, has any further thought of you, nor of your words."

Markus, regarding him attentively, with an earnest expression, as if to urge upon him a deeper reflection, said:

"But, Johannes, do you not remember the story of that little seed — the most diminutive of all seeds? It falls to the ground — is trodden under foot — no one sees it — it appears to be completely lost and dead. But in good time it begins to germinate, and grows to be a plant. And the plant bears new seeds, which are scattered by the wind. And the new seeds become new plants, and the whole terrestrial globe becomes too small for the might of what proceeds from that insignificant seed. Has Johannes forgotten me and my words?"

Johannes shook his head.

"Well, then, Johannes and Marjon are not the only ones with ears to hear, are they? The spark has fallen, and shines in secret. The seed lies in the dark ground, and waits its time."

Gradually the ward began to fill with visitors. Relatives were now sitting beside each bed. There were wives and mothers with children, little and big, and some had babes at the breast. A subdued murmuring filled the place, where the smell of old and long-worn clothing mingled with the sharp scent of the disinfectants.

"Stay with me, children, as long as is permitted. The instrument is broken, and will soon cease to sound. Listen to it so long as it vibrates."

"Are you going to leave us, Markus?" asked Johannes, setting his teeth to keep command of himself.

"I have performed my task," said Markus.

"Already? Already?" they both asked. "We cannot spare you. We might for a little while, but not for always."

"Where is your memory, Johannes? You possess me always, and some time I shall be still closer to you than I now am."

"But, Markus, how can I, without you, help people in their sorrow? Indeed, I am far from knowing the way yet. It seems as though I ought to be asking the way, for weeks to come, day and night."

"Dear Johannes, I have said enough. To ask day and night would help you no more than to think day and night upon what I have already said to you. It seems—does it not—as if I had spoken little, and done little, among men. But recall how the same was said of old, and how it has never, through many words, become clearer, but always more dim. Where the plain commandments have not enough weight, much speaking has not a particle of effect. Has not the best already been said—two thousand years ago? Millions have torn and martyred one another on account of additions, because

of misinterpretations, explanations, and commentaries; but the simple commandment, known of all, they have not kept. Concerning the swaddling-cloths they have fought bitterly; but the babe itself they have left to the swine and the dogs."

They were permitted to stay throughout the time of visiting, and Johannes related where he had been during the night of his betrothal.

Marjon, having listened, asked:

"Markus, if he really saw the whole world as it is to be, why did he neither see nor hear anything of Markus himself?"

But Markus closed his eyes, as if weary of listening, laid back his head with a contented smile, and said, gently:

"The faithful architect is not concerned about his own renown, but about the work itself."

Then he indicated that he wished to rest; and, exchanging looks, they slowly stood up, and with reluctant steps, absorbed in deep thought, they turned away.

On Saturday, when they came again, they looked straight over to Markus' bed, for now they knew where he lay. But an icy fear came upon them when they caught sight of his face, below the white swathing-cloths. It was like sallow wax, with insunken eyes, and lay pressed into the pillow. They thought he was dead.

And when they stopped, hesitating and trembling, the patient in the cot next that of Markus motioned to them to come nearer.

"Come on, you," said the man, a disreputable old fellow with a bandage around his bald head, a crooked nose, and a shaggy beard stained a yellow-brown with tobacco-juice. "He isn't cold yet, but he's snoozin' away's steady's a new-born babe. Isn't that so, Sjaak?"

And Sjaak, the patient on the other side — a drunkard with a broken leg, and a face full of red pimples — cried out: "Hear me! I couldn't sleep better meself — after a couple o' drinks."

"Just make yerselves easy," said the old fellow. "Don't be upset about it. He'd be sorry if you went away again."

"A little less noise, number eight," called the nurse. "Talk quietly."

"Is he your brother?" asked Sjaak, in a whisper this time. Johannes nodded.

"They've given him the very devil," said the old man, "just as they gave it to me. Though I believe they served me about right."

"I'm askin' a great deal," said Sjaak; "but if we've both always got to stay in this here boardin'-house — him and me — why, then, I'd like to ask the good Lord not to let him kick the bucket before I kicks it. Because if I've got to stay here alone with that old red-nose there, and my own damn wicked carcass, then — hi! hi! hi!"

Then came a sudden outburst of maudlin sobs, due, no doubt, to a condition of enforced abstinence.

"Silence!" called the Sister, sternly.

Markus waked up and greeted his two loved ones. Then he looked at his neighbors, right and left, and asked:

"Have you been childish again, Sjaak? I heard you, indeed. No one is forever doomed, I tell you, neither you nor old Bram — if you take care from now on to drink water only, and not gin."

"I swear I will, Marrakus — swear it by God!" said Sjaak, striking himself on the breast.

"You cannot do that, Sjaak; neither would it help. After a half-glass of beer you will have forgotten all your vows."

"No beer, either," said Sjaak. "So help . . ."

"Be quiet now, Sjaak. Do not talk about it, but let it alone."

"Mar-r-akus," said Old Bram, in a hoarse, quaking voice, at the same time sitting up, with his griffin-like knuckles stretched out over the woollen covers, "tell me now, the honest truth: can it be possible for such a old hulk as me to escape eternal damnation? I'm shy of the priest, but I was brought

up a Christian: and now that I can't get no booze here, I settle down in me bed o' nights with the jim-jams, and shake like an earthquake. But if *I* don't have to go to the devil, they can go to blazes with their bloomin' damnation! They can use their fires to dry the shirts of the angels, or to bake butter-cakes! — it's all the same to me."

"Listen, my man," said Markus, kindly. "I am going to speak to you from my heart. Will you believe me?"

"That I will, Marrakus," replied the old man, seriously, holding up a withered talon.

"When I stand before the Father above — if He let me into heaven — I shall say, I will not enter in until Old Bram also is redeemed from hell — even if he be the very last one."

For a time the old fellow continued to gaze into the earnest eyes of Markus. Then his grotesque face assumed a whimsical grin, and he let himself fall back on his pillow, with a thud. There he lay, dumfounded, staring at the ceiling — grinning, mumbling, and shaking his head. Johannes heard him whisper, "God-a-mighty! — Jesus Christ — Jesus Mary — God-a-mighty forever —" and so on and on.

Gently, yet not without some bitterness, Marjon asked:

"But, Markus, is he worthy of that? The fellow is half-witted."

Markus replied, "And Keesje, then? Have you not shed tears over him? There is more need for them here."

Thereat the two lapsed into thoughtful silence. At length Johannes, sighing deeply, exclaimed, "Oh, how many enigmas there are! The golden key seems farther away than ever."

"Yet it is nearer," said Markus. "Because you have chosen Me and Life, instead of Windekind and Death."

"The lily of eternal wisdom is a tender flower, which needs to grow slowly, and of itself."

"The Father hath sent us all forth to search for it; but no one findeth it alone."

"Eternal wisdom is like a bashful maiden: she flees from him who pursues too recklessly; but that one who turns

aside, and first follows after love — him she coyly comes to find.”

When Markus had said this, Marjon blurted out:

“Johannes and I are husband and wife.”

Markus nodded, without appearing at all surprised.

“Will you join us in truth, Markus?” asked Johannes.

“Can I give truth, Johannes, where it is not?” asked Markus.

“That is not what I mean,” said Johannes, in confusion; “but I will promise to be true to her, in the sense you mean.”

“Consider your words, Johannes. A promise is a prophecy. Who can prophesy without full knowledge? This man beside me here promised not to drink. He intended not to; but what is his promise worth, without knowledge? Have you knowledge of your lasting faith? Then say, ‘I desire to be true,’ and show it. But make no promises; for whoever makes an idle promise is guilty; and whoever keeps a false promise is more guilty than he who breaks it.”

Then said Marjon to Johannes: “I do not wish you to make any promises, but I want your loyalty. If you will not remain true without promises, I do not wish them. Can you love only because you have promised to? For such love as that I would not thank you.”

“Then I will say that I feel true, so far as I know myself,” said Johannes, “and I will promise that I will do everything in my power to remain true.”

“That is more considerately said,” added Markus.

“But where we are to set up housekeeping I cannot yet see — he a *piccolo*, and I only a housemaid! That doesn’t bring in much. I think we shall yet fetch up in a tingel-tangel.”¹

“It cannot make any difference to me where we find ourselves, if only I know I am contributing something toward the good life — toward the happiness of all those fine and dear people whom I have seen. But there will be small chance of that, either as *piccolo* or in a tingel-tangel.”

¹ A kind of cheap music-hall.

"Children," said Markus, "out of the word springs the deed, and out of the deed springs life. And every one who speaks the good word creates the deed and fosters life."

"Good," said Johannes. "We will speak the word to all who have ears, so long as we shall live; and even if in prison, we shall speak it. And I have not only a mouth, but hands also that are willing to do."

"Such hands will always find something to do — with more to follow; for the word and the deed are like the forest and the rain: the forest attracts the rain, and the rain makes the forest grow."

"But how, then," cried Johannes, "how? I see no way, no opportunity for my deeds."

"Do you remember what I told you about the field-laborers? That tells it all. And this I say to you, Johannes: constant love makes one invincible; love, a sure memory, and patience. For him who draws nigh to the Father, and who forgets not, who remains always the same, — for such a one, although he still be weak, God always opens the way through every obstruction and perplexity. He is like one who continues to urge gently, in one direction, through throngs that go — they know not whither. He will make progress where others lag behind. And think of it, children, the highest and noblest thing you can long for is still only sad and inferior compared with what you can attain through a calm and steadfastly determined love."

The bell which warned the visitors that it was four o'clock, and time to leave, had sounded some time ago, and the ward was nearly empty. The head nurse softly clapped her hands, to indicate to Johannes and Marjon that they must pass on. They were obliged to rise.

Then the door opened, and Professor Snijman came in with two assistants. The professor was a tall man, with a beardless face, and brown hair which curled behind his ears and about his carefully shaven neck. He had a hard and haughty

look, with an assumption of stately condescension. With short steps he walked up to Markus' bed, followed by the two young men — his assistants — with little pointed, blonde beards, and in spotless white linen coats.

"Well, well! Come! Visitors still? Not getting on very fast, are you?" said the professor.

At the same time he studied Markus with the cool calculation of a gardener considering whether he will uproot the shrub or let it remain. Then he took Markus' paralyzed hand in his own, and moved it meditatively.

"It seems to me, gentlemen — don't you think? — that we'll have to try what the knife can do here. Don't you think so? It's a *casus perditus*, anyway, isn't it? And who knows? . . . removal of the bone splinter — relieving the pressure on the motor-centre . . . Possibly splendid results, don't you think?"

The assistants nodded, and whispered to each other and to the professor. Markus said:

"Professor, will you not let me rest in peace? I am quite resigned to my condition. I know that it will be labor lost; and I am not willing to be made unconscious."

"Come, come," said the professor, half commanding, half in pretended kindness. "Not so gloomy, not so crest-fallen. We'll just see if you can't have the use of this arm again, shall we not? You need not be afraid. Everything is safe, and no pain. Would you not like to be able again to draw on your own blouse, to cut your meat, and to fill your pipe? Come, come! Keep up courage — keep up courage. Sister, to-morrow — ten o'clock — on the operating-table."

Then to Marjon and Johannes:

"Hello, young folks, it's after four. Out of the ward, quick!"

Markus put out his hand, which they both kissed, and said: "Till I see you again."

XXV

THE next Wednesday, at two o'clock, when they came again with the stream of visitors, and, with the eagerness of those who thirst and know where they will find water, hastened to the ward where Markus lay, they saw, as they entered, three green screens around his bed.

They had not yet learned what that means in a hospital ward, and they stepped up to the bed as hastily as ever, expecting that Markus might now be able to speak to them with more privacy. But Sjaak, at number six, saw them coming, and, thrusting out his lower lip compassionately, he shook his red head.

"Gone!" said he.

And Old Bram, on the other side:

"Just missed him! Gone — this mornin'!"

"Gone!" exclaimed Johannes, terrified and not understanding. "Where?"

"Well," replied Sjaak, "if he'd only come back and tell me where, I'd know more than I do."

And Bram, whom Sjaak could not see, on account of the screen, said to Marjon:

"He promised me," striking the woolen covers with his fist, "that I'll not be lost. He promised it, and I count on it. I just do!"

"What has happened to him?" asked Marjon, gradually comprehending.

"They operated on him," said Sjaak. "They got the ash-can out of his brains. If he'd lived, then he'd 'a' walked again. He'd 'a' left the premises now, if he'd only lived."

"Come with me, Marjon," said Johannes; and he led her away. Then softly, "Shall we ask to see him — now?"

Marjon, pale as death, but calm, replied: "Not I, Jo. I

want to keep the living picture before me as a last remembrance, not the dead one."

Johannes, as pale as she, silently acquiesced.

Then he went to the head nurse and asked, softly and modestly:

"When is the funeral to be, Sister?"

The Sister, a small, trim, pale and spectacled lady, with a rather sour but yet not heartless face, gave the two a swift glance, and said, somewhat nervously and hurriedly:

"Oh, you mean number seven, do you not? Yes? Well, we know nothing about him. There is indeed no family, is there? There was no statement of birth — no ticket of removal — nothing. There is — ah . . . there is to be no funeral."

"No funeral, Sister!" exclaimed Marjon. "But what then? What — what is to be done with . . . with him?"

Then the nurse, with a scientific severity probably more cruel than she purposed, said:

"The cadaver goes to the dissecting-rooms, Miss."

For a time the two stood speechless — completely dismayed and horrified. They had not thought of that possibility — they were not prepared for such a thing. They both felt it unbearably gruesome, now that they faced the fact, and were without advice.

"Is there no help for it, Sister?" asked Johannes, stammering in his confusion. "Can it not . . . can it not . . . from the poor fund. . . ?"

He comprehended that it would be a question of money, but he could see no relief.

More practical, Marjon immediately asked, "What would it cost, Sister?"

"I am sorry, Miss," replied the nurse, her feelings now really touched for them, "but I fear you have come too late. You ought to have asked about that in advance. The professor has given express orders."

"Twenty-five gulden, Sister? Would that be enough?" asked Marjon, perseveringly.

The Sister shrugged her shoulders.

"Possibly, if you ask the professor, and if you can prove that you belong to the family. But I am afraid it is too late."

The two turned away in silence.

"What shall we do, Marjon?" asked Johannes, when they were in the street.

"There is no use in going to that professor," said Marjon. "He's a conceited fool — bound to have his own way. But it's a matter of money."

"I have nothing, Marjon," said Johannes.

"Neither have I, Jo — at least, nothing to begin with. But we must go after the people who *do* have something. You know who."

"It is miserable work, Marjon."

"It is that; but we shall maybe get still harder work on his account. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, of course; but neither will I shun it. I am going, now. I know well where you want me to go."

"Good! They are the richest, are they not? But I, too, am going out to get something. You might not succeed there."

"Where are you going?"

"Where there is money, Jo, — to the circus, and to Vredelust."

"Have you enough to get there with?"

"Yes. I've enough for that."

Great was the indignation in the Roodhuis and Van Tijn households when they heard of the event. Sentimentality, the enjoyment of the sensational, and attachment to tradition — all this so moved the good women that their meagre purses contributed, without delay, three gulden and twenty-four cents.

In the meantime Johannes dragged himself to Dolores' villa.

In the drawing-room, beside a brightly flaming wood fire, sat Van Lieverlee engaged in lively conversation with two

young-lady callers, for whom the countess was pouring tea. Into this circle came Johannes, with his sad heart and his lugubrious petition.

He entered hurriedly, awkwardly, abruptly, without heeding the astonished and disdainful looks of the visitors, nor the very evident consternation which his poverty-stricken appearance, his untoward entrance, and his melancholy tidings made upon host and hostess.

"But, Johannes," said Van Lieverlee, "I thought you were more philosophical and had higher ideas than that. It seems to me that — for your friend who claimed to be a magician, and for yourself who believed in him — it makes a sad lot of bother what happens to the dust out of which his temporal presence was formed."

"I thought," replied Johannes, "that as you are now a Catholic, you might perhaps feel that you could do something for. . . ."

"Certainly," said Van Lieverlee, scornfully, "if your friend also were a Catholic. Was he?"

"No, Mijnheer," replied Johannes.

"But, Johannes," said the countess, "why was not your friend in a burial club? Nowadays all people of his class belong to such clubs. Is that not so, Freule?"

"Of course," replied the Honorable Lady. "Every decent poor person belongs to a club. But it's astonishing how people will complain of their poverty and yet be so thoughtless and careless."

"Yes, astonishing," sighed the other visitor.

"Then you will do nothing for me?" asked Johannes, not without a touch of bitterness in his tones.

The countess looked at Van Lieverlee, who frowned and shook his head.

"No, dear Johannes. For anything else, quite willingly; but for this there seems to be no justification."

A whole night and day passed in which nothing could be

done, since Marjon had not yet returned; and the three gulden and twenty-four cents had only increased by very slow degrees to about five gulden.

At last, on Saturday forenoon, a carriage drew up to the door of the little coffee-house, and out stepped a stately figure in black, which, with its old-time jetted bonnet, heavy rustling black-silk skirt, full mantilla, and a dainty, lavenderlike suggestion of linen chests, and of choice silken souvenirs, entirely filled the narrow entrance.

"Aunt Seréna!" cried Johannes. And in a quick impulse of warm affection he threw his arms around her.

"It is herself!" said Marjon, excited by her success. "And I've got ten gulden from the dark woman, who is not so bad as I thought she was."

Aunt Seréna received a cup of coffee, and was soon on good terms with the Roodhuis family.

In the same carriage that had brought her, Marjon and Johannes drove with her to the hospital. They were sure of success, now, relying upon Aunt Seréna's wealth.

But you will not be surprised to hear that they arrived too late — that the doorman, and the doctor on duty, gave them positive assurance that, for all the gold in the world, there could now be no question of burial — because no one could reassemble what had once been the body of their friend.

"Wretches!" muttered Marjon, as they went homeward. But Johannes cried out: "Oh, Marjon, Marjon, the time is not yet come for men to honor their kings."

There was mourning only in the dark alcove behind the drinking-room of the total-abstainers' coffee-house; but there the mourning, the sobbing and the sighing, were genuine.

Before going away, Aunt Seréna remarked:

"You see, the golden apples of my little tree were good for something, after all."

